THE TRAGEDY OF CALVARY

MGR. HENRY BOLO

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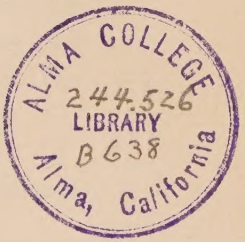
By
The Abbé Henry Bolo

SECOND IMPRESSION



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Preface

Is it not vain to tread in the footsteps of the many, and relate yet once more the tragic story of Jesus sacrificed for the sins of the world?

Saints, with their love; orators, with their emotion; poets, with the flame of genius; scholars, with the treasures won by their patience; have they not brought to the foot of the Cross everything that the intellect and the heart of man can offer to the generosity of God?

It is possible.

Nevertheless, the writer thinks that one voice still remains to be heard.

Bossuet has said: "It pertains to God "alone to speak to us of His grandeurs; "it pertains to God alone to speak to us "of His humiliations."

It has been the author's endeavour to

glean throughout the Scriptures, and to group in due relation those scattered phrases which God has employed in "speaking to us of His humiliations."

HENRY BOLO.

December 25, 1892.

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Prelude

Two Forms of Justice

If God were not just, He would not be God.

Now perfect justice is a fearful thing: that is to say, absolute, implacable, unfaltering justice; the justice that would fall short if it exacted not the uttermost farthing in payment of its debts; the justice that would be disgraced if the most imperceptible fault escaped its penetration or its claims.

And God would not be God if He were not infinitely just with this infinite justice.

And because sin is an offence of which the honour and authority of God are the measure (that is to say, an offence without measure), an expiation without measure could alone compensate for sin.

And further: sin being, on the part of humanity, a vast, inexhaustible river, an

ocean of which each succeeding day increases the depth and widens the bounds; a fearful treasury of iniquities, almost infinite in their variety and number; justice demanded that, as the full price of ransom, all anguish, all grief, all cruelty, should be heaped upon the head of the Victim singled out to "take away the sins of the world" (John i. 29).

Four thousand years the Justice of God waited for the propitious hour and the all-suffering victim.

From time to time a mysterious voice asked of the prophets: "What seest "thou?"

"I see wide-eyed Justice, *who waits*!" (Jer. i. 11).

And humanity, conscious of a cloud of vengeance brooding, black and menacing, overhead, from century to century has put this question to the seers:

"Watchman, what of the night? What "seest thou?" (Is. xxi. 11). And the confused replies are as the incoherent, terrified words of one who struggles in a nightmare (Is. xxi. 12).

From the sombre depths of eternity comes the voice of Justice who waits:

"Behold, I come to thee, O Jerusalem,
"and will execute a judgment in the midst
"of thee in the sight of the nations.

"And I will do in thee that which I
"have not done, and the like to which I
"will do no more, because of all thine
"abominations.

"I, dry-eyed, implacable, will crush thee.
"I will know no pity.

"I will draw out my sword from its
"scabbard.

"Thus will I satiate my fury, and
"satisfy my indignation, and I will be
"comforted. And they shall know that
"I am God, when I have spoken in my
"zeal, and when I shall have accomplished
"my indignation in them.

"As for thee, I will make of thee a
"waste, a reproach among the nations
"round about, a spectacle to them that
"pass by.

"Thou shalt be a reproach and a scoff,
"an example and an astonishment to the
"nations in the day that I execute my
"judgments in rage and indignation and
"in furious rebukes.

"I, the Lord, have spoken it.

"And I will shoot out my arrows. And

"I will send evil beasts upon you to utter "destruction; and pestilence and blood "shall pass through the midst of you; "and I will bring the sword upon you.

"I, the Lord, have spoken it" (Ezek. v. 8-17).

Thus, through all the length of the Scriptures, Justice mutters and threatens ceaselessly, as if to appease impatience, and cheat the weariness of waiting.

Humanity, frightened by His threats, offers up to Him continually worthless blood and impotent prayers.

All these scourges were reserved for sinners (Ps. xxxi. 1). A natural death would not suffice to expiate their iniquities (Ps. xxxvi. 20). They must endure the most horrible death (Ps. xxxiii. 22).

"I will visit their iniquities with the "rod; I will answer their sins by blows" (Ps. lxxxviii. 33).

"When I shall find the set time I shall "judge uprightly" (Ps. lxxiv. 2).

"Ah! I will comfort myself over mine "adversaries; and I will be revenged of "mine enemies" (Is. i. 24).

And when they see that no one can

deliver from my hand the victim that I hold, terrified they will cry :

" Who knoweth the power of Thine " anger, and for Thy fear can number Thy " wrath ? " (Ps. lxxxix. 11).

So mutters Justice, as thunder mutters among the gathering clouds ere yet the storm has broken.

The chosen people of God know that " He will be justified in His threats, and " that His sentences will triumph when they " are judged " (Ps. l. 6).

They offer up victims : and Justice mocks at them :

" Thinkest thou that I will eat the flesh " of bullocks and drink the blood of goats ? " (Ps. xlix. 13).

But the day was approaching : " the " expected day, the day of the Lord God of " hosts, the day of vengeance, that He may " avenge Himself of His adversaries.

" And the holy sword shall devour, and " it shall be satiated and made drunk with " their blood ; for the Lord God of hosts " hath a sacrifice " (Jer. xlvi. 10).

A God-Man, of whom it was said from the time of his manifestation here below, " Behold the Lamb ! " had just consented

to be crushed under the intolerable anger, to replace the sacrifices and offerings that Justice would not away with; saying to the Eternal Wrath:

"Since I have a body that can bleed "and die, here am I!"

This is why in Jerusalem the priests, the scribes, the judges, unconscious and inequitable servants of the justice of God, had entered into abominable partnership (Ps. ii. 2) and consulted together how they might by subtility kill the Christ (Matt. xxvi. 4).

Infamous as was human justice at this time, it all unconsciously carried out the sentence passed by the justice of God.

For, of a truth, Jesus could not have been delivered to the Jews without permission from on high (John xix. 11).

Hitherto an unseen hand had protected Him against His enemies.

No evil had befallen Him, neither had any plague come nigh His dwelling. An escort of angels kept Him in all His ways, bearing Him up in their hands, that He might not hurt His foot on the stones. A mysterious power had shielded Him

from the lion and the dragon; that is, from treachery, the treachery of the Jewish people, no less than the anger and hatred of the synagogue. The arrows which fly by day passed harmlessly over His head; the treachery that skulks in darkness might not touch Him (Ps. xc. 5-13). Insidious questions (Mark xii. 14), violent accusations (Luke xi. 15), insolent abuse (Matt. xi. 19) had only served to throw into higher relief His loyalty, His meekness, and the majesty of His mind. Ever since His entry into public life He had met with hostility; but always He foiled it. Those who laid snares for Him found themselves caught in their own traps (Ps. lvii. 6). They had tried to take Him by force, but His Father miraculously delivered Him from "the hand of unrighteous and cruel men," careless of those very laws of which they were the guardians (Ps. lxxi. 4). Neither a union of hatred, nor a union of strength —the strength of the multitude—had been able to triumph over the supernatural protection surrounding Him (John viii. 59).

Alas! the sacred spell was about to

be broken. Already the Son of Man was abandoned to sinners! (Matt. xvi. 21).

It was this that stirred Jerusalem, the prophetic city. The human tigers smelt blood, and trembled with anticipation. The chief priests and the Pharisees met in council and deliberated, saying among themselves:

"What do we, for this man doth many "miracles?" (John xi. 47, 48).

"Do you see that we prevail nothing? "Behold the whole world is gone after "Him" (John xii. 19).

"If we let Him alone so, all will believe "in Him, and the Romans will come, and "take away our place and nation."

"But one of them, named Caiaphas, "being high priest that year, said to "them: 'You know nothing.'

"Neither do you consider that it is "expedient for you that one man should "die for the people, and that the whole "nation perish not.

"And this he spoke not of himself: he "was the inspired priest, he prophesied the "redeeming death of Jesus."

He had just pronounced, as if author-

ised, the sentence of death decreed by the Justice of God.

"He did not know that Jesus should "die not only for that nation, but to "gather together in one the children of "God that were dispersed throughout "the world" (John xi. 48-56).

This council of the chief priests had been foretold by the prophets:

"Let us lie in wait for the just, be- "cause He is not for our turn, and He "is contrary to our doings, and upbraideth "us for transgressions of the law, and "divulgeth against us the sins of our way "of life.

"He boasteth that He hath the know- "ledge of God, and calleth Himself the "Son of God.

"He is become the censurer of our "thoughts.

"He is grievous unto us, even to be- "hold.

"We are esteemed by Him as triflers, "and He abstaineth from our ways as "from filthiness; and He preferreth the "latter end of the just, and glorieth that "He hath God for His Father.

"Let us see then if His words be true;

"and let us prove what shall happen to "Him, and we shall know what His end "shall be.

"For if He be the true Son of God, "He will defend Him, and will de- "liver Him from the hands of His "enemies.

"Let us examine Him with outrages "and tortures that we may know his "meekness and try His patience.

"Let us condemn Him to a most "shameful death; for there shall be respect "had unto Him by His words" (Wisd. ii. 12-20).

From that day the chief priests were determined to kill him.

"And the pasch of the Jews was at "hand, and many from the country went "up to Jerusalem before the pasch to "purify themselves.

"They sought therefore for Jesus, and "they discoursed one with another stand- "ing in the temple. What think you, "that He is not come to the festival "day?

"And the chief priests and the Phari- "sees had given a commandment, that if "any man knew where he was he should

"tell, that they might apprehend Him" (John xii. 55-57).

The hour had struck for the Saviour to say, "Lo! I come!"

The Victim

It is the 29th of March, A.D. 33.

How radiant is the morn!

The spring is still young, delicate and sensitive to cold, but early, for we are in Judea. The earth stirs in her winter sleep, and thrills at the kiss of her royal friend, the returning sun (Cant. ii. 11). The more hardy flowers open their petals, and lift smiling faces (Cant. v. 1). Across the fragrant turf, full of the stir and hum of bees, overhanging olive-trees throw a shadowy lace-work: a dainty net, as it were, to catch the joy of the earth. The fig-trees which seem to spring from the great rocks surrounding Bethphage are bursting into leaf (Cant. ii. 13). In the hollows of the stones of Bethany, where Magdalen is already praying, turtle-doves croon their love songs to celebrate the regeneration of spring. (Cant. ii. 12). Here and there the graceful vine relieves the austere slopes of the valley of Josa-

phat, and diffuses in the air the intoxication of its flowers before pouring into the heart the intoxication of its grapes (Cant. ii. 13).

Treachery lurks at the feast; the baleful mandragora, which forces its double root into the indignant earth, spreads forth its first leaves and mingles its pungent odour with the perfumes of nature (Cant. vii. 13). For whom is this deadly poison mingled in the laughing and flower-crowned goblet? One seems tempted to cry to the mild and gracious Saviour, in the words of the Well-Beloved:

"Flee away, O my beloved, and be like "to the roe, and to the young hart upon "the mountains of aromatical spices" (Cant. viii. 14).

But no! Nature, enamoured of the God who, in six days, will redeem her, calls Him. She has flowers and perfumes for Him; for Him she has love and song, beauty and intoxication. In the twittering of birds, and the whispering of leaves, she seems to murmur:

"Show me, O thou whom my soul "loveth, where thou feedest, where thou "liest in the mid-day. I have made for

"thee here a bed of flowers" (Cant. i. 6).

Prayer being never extinguished on the Master's lips—cup of love!—nor in the golden censer of His heart, He must at this moment have repeated the words of David, those which commence the sacrifice of the Mass, "I will go to the "altar of the Lord, of God who rejoices "my youth" (Ps. xlii. 4).

And Jesus comes out of the pleasant house at Bethany, where that night His eyes had slept, though His heart was waking (Cant. v. 2). In the distance, the desolate heights of Calvary loom dimly through the morning mists. Between Calvary and Jesus smiles the spring.

He was thirty-three years of age; and had just accomplished the most famous of his miracles—the raising of Lazarus. His name and fame sounded throughout Judea.

It is true His adoptive father, Joseph, was dead, but He had still his mother.

And on that day He started for Jerusalem. First in His line of route lay Bethphage, dominating the entrance to

the valley of Josaphat; then the Garden of Olives, which adjoins Bethphage; the brook of Cedron which flows through the valley; and lastly, the Golden Gate, which opens on to the slope facing the Garden of Olives and admits the pilgrim into the Holy City.

As far as to Bethphage He skirted the Mount of Olives, having below Him, on either side, the open country. As He passed, the sweet morning scents mingled with the prayers of Him who is "the flower of the fields and the lily of "the valleys" (Cant. ii. 1). The same heavenly dew fell alike on the sward, quenching its thirst, and on the head of Jesus, filling His locks with "the drops of the night" (Cant. v. 2).

By twos and threes, however, the disciples were arriving from all quarters. Is it likely that "the voice of the Beloved who cometh skipping across the hills," would fail to summon "the daughters of Jerusalem," that is, "the souls of the faithful" (Cant. ii. 8)? It was known that He had supped overnight with the newly-risen Lazarus, and had passed the night at the house in Bethany. Many

of those whom He had chosen out, had healed or pardoned, collected in this neighbourhood, consumed with a desire to see Him, and had patiently waited since dawn that they might not miss Him (Ps. lxii. 2). Their hearts, pierced by love, witnessed to the truth of this saying :

"Thy mercy is better than lives. . . . "I have remembered thee upon my bed" (Ps. lxii. 4, 7).

Thus did the Master arrive at Bethphage, with a veritable escort of disciples and apostles. Below, the Valley of Josaphat lay exposed to view.

He paused. Royalty awaited Him on the further side of Cedron ; and pomp is always disquieting. The haughty Cæsar, mailed and armed with tyranny, had hesitated for a moment at the brink of the stream which separated him from Rome. Moreover, Bethphage was a priestly habitation. Here were reared the sacrificial kids and lambs for Jerusalem. It was fitting that the Lamb of God, sacrificed to expiate the sins of the world, should start from the same market town. The Master recalled to

mind that this was the very day appointed by Mosaic law for selecting the Paschal victim (Ex. xii. 3). He willed to make His entry into Jerusalem from Bethphage.

"Go into the village over against you," said He to two of His disciples, probably Peter and John, "and you shall find an "ass tied and a colt with her; loose "them, and bring them to me. And if "any man shall say any thing to you, "say ye, The Lord hath need of them; "and forthwith he will let them go" (Matt. xxi. 2, 3).

"The ass and her foal," says St Peter Damien, "signify humility and simplicity." Humility, which is sincerity; simplicity, which is the way of light (Matt. vi. 22).

While the two disciples departed to fulfil His command, the Master dreamily let His gaze wander over the valley of judgment. Silently He prayed:

"Judge me also, O my God, and con-"found not my motive with that of the "guilty multitude. Save me from the "cruel and wicked men. Thou art my "strength, O God! Why dost Thou "make me feel that Thou hast abandoned

" me at the very outset of my sorrowful " journey ? "

The returning disciples draw near with the ass and foal.

Jesus continues : — " Send out, O " Father, thy light and thy truth, that " they may lead me and guide me to " Jerusalem, to the holy mountain ; and " thence to thine everlasting tabernacles."

Pagan ignorance has always regarded the donkey as a despicable and ridiculous animal. But in truth it is meek, docile, contented with little, faithful, and unquestionably the most intelligent among the beasts of burden. The sportive foal shares with the lamb and the kid the kindness that mankind accords so willingly to the weak, the confiding, the gentle. The ass, in the early days of the history of Israel, had the honour of carrying Balaam, the most directly inspired of the prophets. The ass, it is foretold in the flashing pages of Isaiah, together with the ox, would recognise the crib of his lord and master (Is. i. 3). The sons of the princes of Israel used this lowly animal for riding ; and the Holy Spirit has preserved, not without

design, the mention of this in the Scriptures (Judges xii. 14).

King David, who prepared the way for the Messiah, and was of the number of those who, so to speak, carried the Saviour in triumph through the Old Testament, cries (Ps. lxxii. 23, 24): "I "am become as a beast of burden before "thee, O Lord, and with thy glory thou "hast received me." The prophet Zechariah, in foretelling the triumphal day of March 29, A.D. 33, had warned Jerusalem, the daughter of Zion:

"Behold thy King will come to thee: "He is poor, and riding upon an ass, and "a colt, the foal of an ass" (Zech. ix. 9).

An indefinable expectation, as of a divinely awakened instinct, filled the heart of the Holy Jerusalem, and kept it on the alert. As soon as the Messiah appeared, issuing from Bethphage on His lowly steed, a rumour ran down the side of the mountain, along the banks of Cedron, to the very walls of the city. The first rays of the rising sun shot up behind Jesus, clothing Him, who at this time was commencing His earthly course, His heroic career (Ps. xviii. 6), in a royal mantle of

light (Ps. ciii. 2). All was ready for His triumph. The splendid meaning of the prophecies, veiled under the mystery of the Scriptures, broke swiftly and suddenly on the waiting multitudes, thrilling them with waves of enthusiasm which they could not resist. "Rejoice, greatly, O "daughter of Zion, behold thy King!" (Zech. ix. 9). And the Jewish people, the prophetic people, the people possessed of God, who prophesy even in their blasphemies, the people who rend their garments, uttering unearthly cries when the Spirit shakes them; this people arose. Jerusalem was in an uproar. Crowds poured out of the gateways; the priests and elders deserted the Temple; withered Scribes forgot the bitter jealousies of the Sanhedrin; puffed-up Pharisees trampled, with flying feet, on their pompous pride, giving no thought to the "broad fringes "of their garments" (Matt. xxiii. 5): artisans, foreigners, the poverty-stricken, the beggars, all the crowd of the city suddenly overflowed the streets, as a river, and streamed forth by the Golden Gate, which opens on the Valley of Josaphat. The mighty flood pours down the slopes

from the city and mingles with the brook Cedron.

Master, the hour has struck in which you are acclaimed King of the Jews! (Matt. xxi. 15). Your people is here; your throne is at hand: hosannah!

Four thousand years the Sacrifice of Redemption has been looked for!

Hosannah!

In Judea are many who have lain four days in the tomb!

Hosannah!

There have been legions of sick and armies of lepers, and no one to heal them!

Hosannah!

The poor have been overwhelmed by contempt and crushed with injustice, and no one has offered himself to condemnation and death for them!

Hosannah!

Throughout the universe have been sinners, and no one was ready to be crucified in their stead!

Hosannah!

There have been the wretched, the despairing, whom no ray of light, no drop of the healing dew of love, have reached!

Hosannah!

Mothers, whose children no one has thought of noticing and blessing!

Hosannah!

Widows, to whom no power could restore a dead son: captives, whom none delivered: the ignorant, to whom no one brought good tidings: the obscure, defenceless against pride: sinners without excuse in the face of hypocrisy: the weak, the fallen, without advocate, without hope!

Hosannah!

The crowd increased continually: the shrill voices of children rising above the babel:

"Hosannah to the Son of David!
"Blessed is He that cometh in the name
"of the Lord!"

But soon shouts and cheering did not suffice to mark their enthusiasm. Carried away by excitement the crowd tore down branches from the palms, olives, and cypress trees, strewing them in the way with shouts of Hosannah! The most highly privileged, those nearest and most immediately on the Saviour's route, knew not what to give in return for the joy that was theirs in seeing Him, kissing His hand, touching His clothes. They

stripped off their garments and laid them before His feet, weeping for joy.

Hosannah! "Blessed be the kingdom "of our father David that cometh!" (Mark xi. 10).

"Thou art beautiful above the sons of "men: grace is poured abroad in thy "lips; therefore hath God blessed thee "forever. With thy comeliness and thy "beauty set out and proceed prosperously "and reign, O Truth, O Justice, O Meek-"ness!" (Ps. xliv. 3, 5).

"Hosannah! Blessed is the King that "cometh in the name of the Lord! Peace "in heaven, and glory in the highest!"

The Pharisees, mingled with the multitude, came cringing to the victor, saying:

"Master, rebuke thy disciples."

"Jesus answered them: I say unto you "that if these should hold their peace, the "stones would cry out" (Luke xix. 40). Only the heart of the Pharisees was more hard, more barren, more accursed, than the stones.

The Jews afterwards decided that this triumphal procession was not sufficiently royal: in their eyes it lacked purple and gold. The true descendant of David and

Solomon could not be this man to whom the popular wit could devise nothing better to offer than branches and scattered garments. They were blinded to the homage of faith, love, devotion, done to Jesus, such as no mortal king had ever received. They did not see that this royal progress, begun in the Valley of Josaphat, would encircle the world, and reaching down the centuries, finish only with the end of time, in the same valley of judgment, and before the Golden Gate of the New Jerusalem.

Following the steps of palm-bearing children, and the poor who flung their threadbare garments in the dust, will come the martyrs, who will cast down their blood and their life; princes, who will cast down their crowns; virgins, who will cast down their future and their beauty; the rich, who will cast down their treasures; the mighty, who will cast down their pride; and always the poor, always the lowly, who will cast down their love.

Hosannah!

When the triumphal escort reached Jerusalem the excitement must have been

intense. Across nineteen centuries we see strangers, Greeks, Jews from the outlying districts, all the vast numbers whom the Feast of the Passover attracted within the walls of the City, rise in their turn, instinct with the same spirit which thrilled in the prophet Isaiah when he cried :

" The burden of the valley of vision.

" What aileth thee, O Jerusalem, that " thou art wholly gone up to the house- " tops ?

" Full of clamour, a populous city, a " joyous city " (Is. xxii. 1-2).

Every one is keeping holiday : for the great Passover is at hand which will redeem all the world. John, in recording the prophecy of Caiaphas, has supplied the reason :

" Jesus had to die, not only for the " Jewish nation, but also that all the sons " of God dispersed throughout all the " world might be re-united into one " church " (John xi. 52).

The Downfall of a Church

JESUS directed His steps towards the Temple.

Before instituting, at the Last Supper, the Church of His flesh and His blood, He was desirous of restoring to the Temple, His "Father's house," something of its early purity. It was seemly that this palace of the God of Israel, which had been founded in the midst of the splendours of Solomon, should have no inglorious end, but at the last should shine with the light of Him of whom it had been the "stone of testimony" through centuries of Judaism (Jos. xxiv. 27).

Without, flooded by sunshine, the Temple presented an aspect of unrivalled splendour. The sheen of its gold was rivalled in brilliance by the whiteness of its marble. The dazzled Jews called it "The Mountain of Snow."

Within, there was no impurity or infamy that failed to find complaisant shelter, and

be at rest. The Temple was the worthy dwelling-place of the Pharisees : the whited sepulchre *par excellence.*

Jesus knew that.

There was the lair of those who must fulfil the prophecy concerning him, the Universal Sinner :

" I will send the teeth of beasts upon " the sinner, with the fury of creatures that " trail upon the ground ! " (Deut. xxxii. 23).

There seethed the wretched beings engendered of hell and hatred for iniquity and homicide (John viii. 44).

From the depths of this den, defiled by rapine and filthiness (Matt. xxiii. 29), the priests condemned, scourged, proscribed, stoned, crucified, whosoever came in the name of the Saviour (Matt. xxiii. 34, 37). For three years they had cringed, furious, inwardly rebellious but powerless against Him of whom it had been said :

" Thou shalt walk upon the asp and the " basilisk " (Ps. xc. 13).

They had tried to incite the religious against Him, by accusing him of violating traditions (Matt. xv. 1). They had tried to awaken suspicion of Him in the minds of the representatives of the Roman

Government, and of the Jewish patriots, by asking Him if it were lawful to pay tribute to Cæsar (Matt. xxii. 17). They had sought to provoke against Him the hostility of the strict Jews, or of the corrupt Sadducees, by appealing to Him on the question of divorce (Matt. xix. 3). Odiously and basely they had slandered Him, accusing Him of being "gluttonous "and a wine-bibber" (Matt. xi. 19). They had outraged, dishonoured, and blasphemed Him, calling Him "possessed of the devil, "the instrument of Beelzebub" (John viii. 48). From time to time Jesus turned at the sound of their hissing whispers. In the divine majesty of His indignation, or in the indescribable serenity of His sweetness, He crushed with a word their hypocrisy, or repulsed by a miracle their blind fury. In former days, filled with pity, He had enfolded with the invincible charm of His sacred humanity the unconscious emissaries of the Sanhedrin; and the Pontiffs had seen their agents return, with empty hands and changed hearts, saying:

"Never man spake like this man" (John vii. 46).

But neither His gentleness nor His

majesty had been able to subdue these souls, devoured by implacable and burning hatred: their sense of impotence serving only to further exasperate them. They all with one accord rose up against the Christ. Not one had a thought "of "justice, of pity, and of honesty." Not one allowed himself to be moved by the simple beauty and noble poverty of Christ. Scribes, Pharisees, hypocrites, unashamed oppressors of the widow and orphan, they gave no thought to the anguish of the divine Mother, who was a widow, nor to the sweetness of her offenceless Son.

While He was "as a meek lamb that is "carried to be a victim," suffering Himself to be led away as though ignorant of the plots contrived against Him, these double-dyed official malefactors were repeating the ominous prophecy:

"Let us put wood on His bread (that "is, let us nail His life to the cross), and "cut Him off from the land of the living" (Jer. xi. 19). Jesus knew all that.

He had read the prophets—His historians—how they had said: they are bloodthirsty executioners; they have the insatiable appetite of tigers: their

"eye is proud and their heart cannot be "satisfied" (Ps. c. 5): scandalous workers of iniquity (Ps. cxl. 9), they are blinded by fury which destroys their reason and overthrows them like drunkenness (Ps. cvi. 27); these princes of the priesthood have persecuted me without cause, they have conceived iniquity in the depths of their hearts, and afterwards have spent their days in overwhelming me with their hatred. They have sharpened their tongues like serpents, the poison of asps is under their lips (Ps. cxxxix. 3, 4). I am right in hating them, these monsters who are let loose upon me (Ps. cxxxviii. 22), for they are infamous. They are corrupt and abominable in their tastes; there is not one that does good, all are depraved, unprofitable; their throat is an open sepulchre; their mouth overflows with cursing and bitterness. They are swift to shed blood (Ps. xiii. 3). Their hands are full of iniquities, and their right hand opens only to receive gifts with which their protection is bought and their justice corrupted. Ah, truly the sorrows of death which encompass me are vomited forth by hell! (Ps. cxiv. 3). They thirst for my

blood, they are impatient to drink it: I have heard them when they are met together to consult concerning me, they desire my soul (Ps. xxx. 14). They can no longer contain themselves: their anger is like the fury of a serpent writhing and twisting itself about, like that of the deaf asp that stoppeth her ears (Ps. lvii. 5); they dream of injustice, their device is as a sharp scissors menacing my days (Ps. li. 4). They chafe in their impatience: when will He die? When will His name at last be blotted out? (Ps. xl. 6). It is thy anger, O God, against the sin for which I am making myself responsible that has kindled them as a fire on the hearth, it is in Thy wrath that Thou hast thus overthrown them, and that Thou hast kindled in them this flame of hatred which consumes them (Ps. xx. 10).

They are cowardly and ignoble. They have lowered their pride even to making war against me with treachery and snares (Ps. cxxxix. 6). For long they have been afraid to act, stifling their murmurs and disguising their bloodthirsty thoughts (Ps. xl. 8). They realised that only in

secret and from the rear could they shoot at the blameless (Ps. lxiii. 5). They laid an ambush for my life, they have combined together and encouraged each other saying: God hath forsaken Him, let us pursue Him, and take Him: there is now nothing to fear, for no one will take His part (Ps. lxx. 10, 11). They have drawn the sword of the Maccabees, and bent the bow of Israel, to overthrow and destroy one poor and puny enemy (Ps. xxxvi. 14). They are sacrilegious, they are untruthful. They are *priests*, who are about to perpetrate this unutterable iniquity; they are officially "clothed with justice!" (Ps. cxxxix. 9). They have chosen, as their scene of action, the sanctuary itself (Ps. lxxiii. 3). They will consummate this great crime in the most solemn season, thus profaning, at one blow, the House of God and the days especially consecrated to Him (Gen. xxvii. 17).

And when Jesus enters the Temple, all the prophecies which circle round the polluted sacerdotalism of the Jews shake His soul, and call up a wave of indignation. The dealers, in collusion with the

priests, are there with their beasts, their coops, their money-tables. Jews, without respect for the House of God, come and go, carrying their loads, and treating the "terrible place" (Gen. xxviii. 7, 8) as a conquered country, a heathen and contemptible land. The Master can endure it no longer. "Is it not written: My "house shall be called a house of prayer "to all nations? But you have made it "a den of thieves" (Mark xi. 17). Seizing a handful of cord or of leather thong, He began to flog all these wretches, overthrowing their tables, scaring away their doves, driving out their beasts. The sacred whip whistles through the air, and falls, as lightning falls, in a storm of divine fury.

"Hear the word of the Lord, ye rulers "of Sodom, give ear to the law of our "God, ye people of Gomorrah. To what "purpose do you offer me the multi-"tude of your victims? . . . When you "came to appear before me, who required "these things at your hands, that you "should walk in my courts? Offer "sacrifice no more in vain: incense is "an abomination to me. The new

" moons, and the Sabbaths, and other " festivals, I will not abide, your assem- " blies are wicked. My soul hateth your " new moons and your solemnities: they " are become troublesome to me, I am " weary of bearing them. And when you " stretch forth your hands, I will turn " away my eyes from you: and when " you multiply prayer, I will not hear: " for your hands are full of blood. Wash " yourselves, be clean, take away the evil " of your devices from my eyes: cease to " do perversely, judge for the fatherless, " defend the widow. . . .

" How is the faithful city, that was full " of judgment, become a harlot? Justice " dwelt in it, but now murderers. Thy " princes are faithless, companions of " thieves " (Isa. i. 10-23).

The leathern thongs whirled in the air, and the wretched beings, divinely scourged, fled, mingling in a common panic with the terrified beasts, grasping at the money on their reeling tables, and pursued by the blinding anger, the avenging hand, the resounding voice of the Son of God.

The Redeemer was able thus to drive from the Temple all the beasts conse-

crated to sacrifice, because "by His own "blood he entered once for all into the "Holies, having obtained eternal redemp-"tion" (Heb. ix. 12). And when He should have purged away the unclean rabble which profaned that Temple of which there would soon not be one stone left upon another, He could approach the altar where burned the fire that was never quenched, and there, as a new Isaac, but recognising the victim (Gen. xxii. 7), silently offer that prayer of which the Jews had ignored the inner meaning:

"My Father, sacrifices and oblations, "and holocausts for sin thou wouldest not, "neither are they pleasing to thee, which "are offered by the law; therefore, I "come!" (Heb. x. 8).

Alas! He thought to have purified the Temple of all shameful barter, of all sacrilegious trading; and the same priests who sold the animals set apart for the sacrifices ordained by Moses, were about to buy Him, Jesus, the spotless victim, for thirty pieces of silver, with which even Judas would not soil his hands at the last.

But mighty as were the unavowed pas-

sions of the priests, their fear was even greater. Their bloodthirsty desires agitated the breasts of cowards. Longing but afraid to strike, they asked themselves when and where they could seize the honest Nazarene who walked about in broad daylight, simple and gracious, with bare head, and surrounded by women of the people and little children. The sound of the triumph accorded Him by the public, re-echoing through the streets of Jerusalem, prolonged, irresistible, made them reflect. How could they, tigers, pounce upon this lamb; how could they, hyænas, lick up His blood, without danger from the populace?

They sought a means, but found none (John x. 39).

They had reckoned without Judas.

They had not observed that base and equivocal treachery was missing from among shameless and wicked men who dishonoured the Temple under the title of Sanhedrin.

It happened that occasionally Jesus and His disciples received alms. He who walked, poor and stripped of everything, across the fields of Judæa, not having

where to lay His head (Luke ix. 58), and driven often by hunger to pluck ears of wheat for food ; he sometimes received an alms. By the contact of His Spirit, He sanctified the blessed stream of charity as He had sanctified, by the contact of His body, the thrice blessed water of baptism.

Now, these alms, bestowed by the widowed and the poor, were entrusted to the care of Judas.

And Judas was a thief (John xii. 6).

One day the Master, feeling the faith of His disciples grow weak, said to them :

" Will you also go away ? And Peter " answered Him : Lord, to whom shall we " go ? thou hast the words of eternal life."

Jesus had added sadly :

" Have I not chosen you twelve ? And " one of you is a devil."

Now He meant Judas (John vi. 68-72).

One day, the sacred feet of the Saviour, bruised and torn with rough walking, received a homage of love. A woman of whom the whole world knows the name (Mark xiv. 9), not understanding why so lovable a person should be misunderstood, why dull humanity should consent to take

a part in His inconceivable humility, why kings did not come to kiss His feet and spread their purple robes before His steps; why this Being, so lovely, so charming, so ideally pure, did not always walk surrounded by the acclamation of His own people, why universal gratitude had not already built up for Him a glorious theme of love; came with an alabaster box containing about 1500 fr. worth of deliciously scented ointment, and broke it over His feet (Mark xiv. 5).

And the Master's friends, for whom the Master had shown a generosity incomprehensible to the angels, complained rudely.

And whilst Jesus, as an excuse for the woman and to soften His disciples, said: "She embalms my body in anticipation of my death which draws near" (Matt. xxvi. 12), one of them indescribably hard and brutal, went out, a hideous and sordid spectacle of anger and avarice (Matt. xxvi. 14).

And this was Judas.

Hitherto he had lived with Jesus as if in harmony with him, hoping to gain some miserable profit for himself. He had followed the apostolic school as the

raven an army, as the squall a ship. He had counted on the earthly kingdom of the Messiah, and on the tribute money, of which he would have the charge. All prodigality irritated him, and this saying of Jesus about His burial was a revelation to him. Jesus, then, was going to die, and he, Judas, had deceived himself. The Master was actually going to die without first filling the outstretched hand of His disciple with gold! If that is to be the case, thought Judas, I will sell Him!

In the bitterness of His soul Jesus must then have remembered the prophecy of David:—

"Had it been an enemy, to say the "least of it, who had pursued me with "malice, I would have borne it. But it "is thou! thou, whose spirit was one with "mine; thou, my eyes; thou, whom all "knew for my friend; with whom I shared "the sweets of my table, and the love of "my father's holy house" (Ps. lv. 13).

Judas, when he had left Jesus, sought out the chief priests, who were restive and quivering between fear and hatred, as a horse between bit and spur. Satan had entered into him (John xiii. 3), accom-

panied by all the denizens of hell filled with light-hearted joy. In his accursed heart Judas bore the infernal triumph and hosannah of devils, who responded to the hosannah of the holy people, and flung their joy against the heavens. He entered the council chamber of the priests and said :

"What will you give me, and I will "deliver Him unto you?" (Matt. xxvi. 14).

Avaricious as Judas was, he was equally dull of perception, and he did not notice the cunning gleam in the eyes of these scoundrels. They would have given all the wealth of Solomon in exchange for Jesus ; but feeling instinctively that no treachery, howsoever base, would cost Judas one pang, they tried him with a paltry sum.

"We will give you thirty pieces of "silver" (Matt. xxvi. 15).

The hatred of Judas avenged itself for the love of the Magdalen ; these thirty pieces of silver were an insulting contrast to the "three hundred pence," the value of the ointment lavished on the feet of the Saviour. (Mark xiv. 5.)

Triumphant success crowned the contemptuous offer of the scribes; thirty pieces of silver representing, according to the Mosaic law, the price of a slave. (Ex. xxi. 32.)

And through it all justice worked out its destiny, and stamped its likeness on the result. The money which aids or repays all crimes, was at that moment being paid down for the blood that would redeem all sinners.

Thus by the direct action of Providence Judas unconsciously wrought the fulfilment of the prophecy:

"They weighed for my wages thirty "pieces of silver" (Zach. xi. 12).

While in the Temple, already so near its destruction, supreme hatred was preparing in this manner for the sacrifice of the perfect Victim, supreme Love was instituting, but with how different rites! the sacrifice of that same Victim, in the room of the Last Supper, where was founded the Church of the future.

The Last Supper

It was fitting that the redeeming sacrifice should not be limited to one particular moment of time or point of space. God had sworn an inviolable oath that the priesthood of Jesus, and consequently his offering, should be eternal (Ps. cix. 4). He had also announced in one of the most solemn prophecies of the Old Testament:

"From the rising of the sun to the "going down in every place there is offered "to my name a clean oblation" (Mal. i. 11).

It was fitting that the voluntary self-sacrifice of the Victim should be manifest; that all should recognise the truth of His saying:

"I lay down My life of Myself; no "man taketh it away from me" (John x. 18).

It was fitting that Jesus should im-

print upon "the sacred memorials of the mystery" of His love a sign that would recall to men His life, His death, His work, in so vivid a manner that every repetition of the sacrifice instituted in the upper room should be a fresh relating of His passion and death. In the words of St. Paul:

"As often as you shall eat this bread, "and drink this chalice, you shall show the "death of the Lord until he come" (1 Cor. xi. 26).

Finally it was fitting that this sacrifice of the Lamb offering Himself to death in adorable resignation, in a passion of love for humanity, should be a sacrifice marked by calmness and purity, by peace and tenderness.

And yet this "perpetual sacrifice" could not and should not differ substantially from the sacrifice, full of violence, torments, and bloodshed, mingled with blasphemy and shouting, surrounded by human brutality and cowardice, which on Good Friday would be consummated on the Cross.

To solve this Divine problem, Jesus "knowing that His hour was come, that

" He should pass out of this world to the " Father; having loved His own who were " in the world, He loved them unto the " end " (John xiii. 1). And He sent Peter and John, saying :

" Go and prepare for us the pasch that " we may eat."

" But they said : Where wilt thou that " we prepare ?

" And He said to them : Behold, as you " go into the city, there shall meet you a " man carrying a pitcher of water : follow " him into the house where he entereth in.

" And you shall say to the goodman of " the house :

" The Master saith to thee : Where is " the guest-chamber where I may eat the " pasch with my disciples ?

" And he will show you a large dining- " room furnished : and there prepare.

" And they going, found as He had said " to them, and made ready the pasch " (Luke xxii. 8-13).

Jesus knew well that everything would be accomplished to the minutest detail, and without impediment, for was it not written :

" Lord, Thou hast prepared a table

" before me, in spite of them that afflict " me.

" Thou hast overwhelmed me with the " kind attentions of hospitality, with a view " to the splendours which should fill my " intoxicating cup ! " (Ps. xxii. 5).

When the hour was come, he sat down with the twelve.

" And he said to them : With desire I " have desired to eat this pasch with you " before I suffer.

" For I say to you, that from this time " I will not eat it, till it be fulfilled in the " kingdom of God " (Luke xxii. 15, 16).

The lamb was served cross-wise, according to Jewish custom, and St John, who, on the morrow, would find his way to Calvary, leaned his head on Jesus' breast.

And Jesus taking bread, gave thanks (Luke xxii. 19).

It would be impossible to find a truer symbol of the earthly life of the Saviour than this morsel of bread : no other emblem represents with such melancholy exactness His sacred humanity.

A grain of wheat, before it can become fruitful, must fall into the furrow, aban-

doned to all the changes of the atmosphere, exposed to every passing danger: thus was the little child cradled in the stall at Bethlehem amid the rigours of winter (John xii. 24, 25).

Now shoots forth a fresh and tender blade of green, the beauty and fleeting grace of which the prophet Isaiah sang (Is. xl. 6, 7), and which matures under the caressing touch of Spring, as the young boy throve in Nazareth, caressed by His Virgin Mother.

Next follows the golden ear, full of precious seed, ready for the sower to gather and cast abroad to all the winds of heaven in hope of future harvests: the ear which passers-by pluck and crush in their hands without pity: as the Messiah, ripe for sowing the world with the seed of truth and love, was bruised by the brutalities of the Jewish people.

Then comes the horror of the grinding; the pounding of the mill-stone which crushes the innermost fibres of the grain condemned to give food and life, to become "fine flour worthy to be offered in "sacrifice" (Mac. i. 8), only by trituration and death.

Finally, one last process is necessary, ere, substantial and complete, it becomes bread. It is essential that the oven be heated, that flames surround the tormented wheat, that fire penetrate it.

And in order that Jesus might become our nourishing food, God willed, at this time, that "wickedness should be kindled "as a fire" (Is. ix. 18); that round about Him "all were heated like an oven" (Hos. vii. 7); and that eternal justice "from above sent fire into His bones" (Lam. i. 18).

Thus it was that Jesus could take bread, this brother to His aching humanity, this symbol of His persecuted life and cruel death, bless it, break it between His hands, and say:

"Take, eat, this is my body which is "given for you" (Matt. xxvi. 26).

On a former occasion, before the disciples were illuminated by the love that shone from that "upper room," they had not comprehended a similar speech. Jesus had said:

"I am the bread of life.

"Your fathers did eat manna in the "wilderness, and are dead.

"This is the bread which cometh down "from heaven; if any man eat of it he "shall not die.

"I am the living bread which came "down from heaven.

"If any man eat of this bread he shall "live for ever; and the bread that I will "give is my flesh for the life of the world.

"The Jews therefore strove among "themselves, saying:

"How can this man give us his flesh "to eat?

"Then said Jesus to them:

"Verily, verily, I say unto you: Except "you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and "drink His blood, you shall not have life "in you. . . .

"My flesh is meat indeed: and my "blood is drink indeed." . . .

Then many of His disciples had said:

"This saying is hard, and who can hear "it? . . .

"And many went back and walked no "more with Him.

"Then Jesus said to the twelve:

"Will you also go away?" (John vi. 48-68).

But at the Last Supper there was no

longer any doubt or hesitation. A divine instinct warned each heart that truly the Flesh was ready, the Bread served, because that death, which would render the heavenly banquet possible, was present at the feast. The true Paschal Lamb appeared "as it were slain" (Apoc. v. 6): and to what end was it sacrificed but to be eaten? But a little while, and this mysterious "seed found in a cluster of "grapes" (Is. lxv. 8, 9) would be trodden in the wine-press of the Passion, and, from Gethsemane to Calvary, inebriate the earth (Ps. lxiv. 10) with blood shed for a world's salvation.

Thus could Jesus take the cup "full "of strong wine" (Ps. lxxiv. 9) and say to His friends:

"Drink, and be inebriated, my well-"beloved" (Cant. v. 1).

"Drink ye all of this. For this is my "blood of the new testament which shall "be shed for many unto remission of sins" (Matt. xxvi. 28).

From henceforth the disciples seemed to understand. They eat, they drank, marvelling at the goodness of that God of whose love they could thus partake.

They eat, enamoured of that divine nourishment which enabled them to say to Him whom angels worship:

"Thou art from henceforth flesh of our "flesh!"

They drank, inebriated by this fervent heroic blood, which stirs the soul, shakes the heart with superhuman enthusiasms, and puts into the empurpled lips these distracted words: "I live no longer, it is Christ who lives in me!" (Gal. ii. 28).

And when Jesus added these words, to perpetuate His feast, and to render inexhaustible the blood of His sacrifice:

"Do this for a commemoration of me" (Luke xxii. 19), the angelic song must have burst forth, as over a new Bethlehem: for Bethlehem signifies, The House of Bread; and prophecies must have trembled in the ravished soul of these the first communicants among mankind.

"What is the good thing of him, and "what is his beautiful thing, but the corn "of the elect, and the wine springing forth "virgins" (Zach. ix. 17).

Thus Jesus, with His own hands, offered His sacrifice.

"Having obtained eternal redemption, "He entered into the Holies; not with "the blood of goats or of calves, but with "His own blood" (Heb. ix. 12). From henceforth the sacrifice of the victim, accomplished in the consummating of a one and only mystery, the unique sacrifice, would present two aspects to humanity: here, overwhelming tenderness; there, the horrors of bloodshed: here, words of peace and love; there, sighs of anguish, cries of despair, mingled with blasphemy and cursing: here, the peaceable oblation of a Lamb without spot; there, the horrible, excruciating, tragic crucifixion of the accursed and prophetic scapegoat: here, the "lovely tabernacle" (Ps. lxxxiii. 2); there, the waste summit of Calvary. The sacrifice was one in substance, identical as regards Priest and Victim and sacrificial action, only the appearance differed. It pleased the love of our Master to permit to pass away amid the whirlwind of Good Friday the awful tragedy of Calvary; whereas He rendered permanent the holy charm of the "Upper Room."

If the incident could have unfolded

without the touch of evil, that evening hour would have been one of heaven on earth. But Heaven is not for those who still are pilgrims here below; and that is why among the twelve he was numbered whom universal horror calls Judas.

A discussion, of which the last word has not yet been said, divides commentators of the Scriptures into two classes: those who assert that Judas committed the first act of sacrilege, and those who demonstrate that he was no longer present when the Master gave His Flesh and Blood as food and drink.

If the crimes of Judas could be forgotten, it would be matter for rejoicing. Since Providence has permitted that one of the traitor's infamies remains unproved, rather let us leave it in semi-obscurity than seek to drag it out into the full light of day.

However this may have been, a deep sense of sadness and oppression fell on all present when the Master said, as they sat together at supper:

"I know whom I have chosen: but "the Scripture must be fulfilled; he that "eateth bread with Me, shall lift up his "heel against Me.

"At present I tell you, before it come "to pass; that when it shall come to pass, "you may believe that I am He. . . ." (John xiii. 18-19).

"When Jesus had said these things He "was troubled in spirit: and He testified "and said:

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, one of "you shall betray Me" (Mark xiv. 18).

The dismayed disciples therefore looked at one another, doubting of whom He spoke (John xiii. 22).

Sadness overwhelmed them. Such treachery seemed so altogether unreal that, since they could not but believe the word of the Master, each one began to doubt himself, and to ask in turn the question:

"Is it I, Lord?"

Jesus answered:

"The Son of Man indeed goeth, as it "is written of Him, but woe to that man "by whom the Son of Man shall be be-"trayed. It were better for him if that "man had not been born" (Matt. xxvi. 24).

John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, was reclining beside Him, leaning his

head on the Saviour's breast. Simon Peter, from his place at the Master's other side, signed to John, over Jesus' head, as if to say: "Of whom does He "speak?" Then John asked Jesus: "Lord, who is it?" In a low voice Jesus replied: "He to whom I shall "give a mouthful of bread." Steeping a morsel of bread, He gave it to Judas Iscariot (John viii. 23-26). Judas, puzzled with fear, already terrified at seeing himself discovered, hypocrite and cynic as he was, dared to also ask the question and feign innocence, so as, if possible, to save appearances before his companions. In his turn he said, probably at the moment Jesus held out towards him the fragment of bread: "Master, is it I?"

"Thou hast said" (Matt. xxvi. 25).

At that same moment, with the fatal mouthful, Satan entered into the soul of the traitor (John xiii. 27).

A thrill of horror ran through Peter; John lifted troubled eyes to the Master; Jesus, already torn by emotion, felt His strength ebbing. As one who fears for his self-control, He said to the traitor:

"That thou doest, do quickly."

But in charity, not to cover the wretch with the confusion he deserved, nor to give to despair the place of repentance, He said it secretly, in an ambiguous manner, and in a voice not to be overheard. The beloved disciple has marked this *nuance*: "Not one of the persons present could "know what He had said to Judas" (John xiii. 28). Moreover, as the latter kept the purse, the other disciples would believe that Jesus had given him sundry instructions concerning necessary purchases for the festival, or concerning alms to be given to the poor.

Judas once outside the door, a sigh of relief escaped the Master: "Now is "the Son of Man glorified, and God is "glorified in Him" (John xiii. 31).

And, in truth, when once the mind has freed itself of the thought of Judas—that is, of him who profanes, who sells, who betrays, who eats and drinks sacrilegiously—nowhere does Jesus appear more attractive, more royal, more lovable, than in the adorable mystery of the Eucharist.

There, truly, He is glorified, and glorifies His Father.

There, as nowhere else, the prophecies of earthly glory are realised, and the "mystery of the kingdom of God" lies hid (Mark iv. 11).

"His horn is exalted in the glory" of golden monstrances (Ps. cxi. 9). Kings acknowledge it, princes rise up in its presence, and, prostrate, they adore it with their foreheads in the dust (Ps. xlix. 8). The anger and blasphemy of sinners fall powerless before it (Ps. cxi. 10), and fail to penetrate the mystic veil which only the eye of faith can pierce. Multitudes flock to bless it (Ps. ii. 2, 3) in the temple of its glory, exalting and praising it above all (Dan. iii. 54). Verily it has dominion from sea to sea, and all the mighty of the earth adore it (Ps. lxx. 8, 11), for there is no shore that has not its temple, its altar, and its sanctuary.

It is the accomplishing of the words of the Wise Man: "The lips of many shall "bless Him that is liberal of His bread (Eccles. xxxi. 28).

St. Paul has said: "Jesus having joy "set before Him, endured the Cross" (Heb. xii. 2). What could this joy be if not that which gave to His soul the

kingdom of the Eucharist? What could compensate for His humiliations and griefs, if not the consolations of the sacred bread and wine? This is why He hastened to institute the Passover of love: "With desire have I desired," He said, and the desire grew more urgent as the terrors of Good Friday drew near. It is written in Leviticus:—

"On the same day that the sheaf is "consecrated a Lamb without blemish shall be killed for a holocaust of the Lord" (Lev. xxiii. 12).

The altar which should console Him for Calvary; adoration which should replace blasphemy; hymns which should be raised in exchange for calumnies; glory which should drown the recollection of humiliation and shame; the ceremonial processions which should succeed the gloomy cortège of Golgotha; prostrated multitudes in an ecstacy of adoration, who should take the place of the shouting, heaving mob at the foot of the Cross; Jesus foresaw it all, and He willed to forestall that hour, just as He perpetuated the remembrance of it.

And since—His sacrifice being accepted

—the free disposal of His flesh and blood is His, once more does He hasten, not willing that earth should await a day longer the inebriating joys of the Tabernacle.

By the Eucharist Jesus reigns over the human soul; He is the sum of all virtue and fills indeed all religion.

But at the same time that He was showing Himself to mankind in the lovely splendour of His face, He was not always accepted, recognised, honoured as the Son of God and the Saviour of souls. Sometimes He would ask sadly:

"The Son of man, when He returneth, "shall He find, think you, faith on earth?" (Luke xviii. 8).

Now He veils Himself under the mystery of the Eucharist, and yet faith becomes ever more unshakable, larger, more profound. Peter is commended in the Gospel for having said one day to the Son of God, living and speaking before him: "Thou art the Christ!" Millions of souls will fall down before this silent, motionless Bread, impassive to insult, and say: "Thou art the Christ!"

Not all the incomprehensibility and

mystery surrounding the real Presence of Jesus on the altar will lessen by one iota the intensity of faith, and will serve only to increase the merit of it. More worthy of admiration than the Sages following the Star of Bethlehem; than the centurion of whom Jesus Himself said: "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel" (Matt. viii. 10), than the apostle falling at the feet of the risen Saviour, crying: "My Lord "and my God!" (John xx. 28), humanity will still approach the altar. And this faith, even more incomprehensible than the mystery itself, is a sweet, comforting thought for the Saviour. But a little while, and one will taunt Him brutally, saying:

"If thou art the Son of God, come "down from the Cross!" (Matt. xxvii. 40). They will call Him "deluder" (Matt. xxvii. 63); they will treat Him as a madman (Luke xxiii. 11). Again a little while, and the apostles themselves, who have heard Him groan, have seen Him bleed and die, will no longer believe in Him. Ah! what joy for His eyes to behold, as in a vision, the

spectacle of these crowds who, having neither seen Him nor heard Him speak, are prepared to believe, to worship, to die, on the strength of this one word spoken at the Last Supper: "This is My Body!"

And further: it is to the Eucharist that sublimity of goodness and holy fertility will come, to draw thence inspiration and power. The eleven, seated round the table where the heavenly manna is provided for them, represent almost all the noblest traits of human character. Peter, who would weep his fall with inexhaustible tears of repentance and love; James, whose faithfulness would know how to "drink of the same chalice" (Mark x. 38), and die; John, whose genius would shed torrents of light around the memory of Christ; Andrew, who one day would cry, moved by an impulse of sublime love: "O "Cross! O holy Cross! may He who "saved me by thee, receive me by thee!" These all, "like men full of new wine" (Acts ii. 13) (and they would be, as it were, inebriated by the Eucharistic wine), would go out into all the world, knowing

nothing save "Jesus Christ, and Him "crucified" (1 Cor. ii. 2), striving, suffering, speaking, dying for Him. It will be the same throughout the history of human holiness. Martyrs whose blood must water the soil from which new Christians must spring, would have no pleasure in shedding their blood had they not drunk, at the sacred feast, that blood of which Bossuet has said that it *must* flow, be the veins whose they may that contain it. Spotless virgins will feed on the heavenly wheat, the sacred flesh, which causes "the beautiful and chaste generation" (Wisdom iv. 1). The learned, the Fathers of the Faith, whose genius shines upon, and reflects for weaker minds, the splendours of divine revelation, will, like St Thomas Aquinas, inquire of the tabernacle, of this bread of angels, "the word that proceedeth from the mouth of God" (Deut. viii. 3).

Those who do penance, who weep, who, left to themselves would lose all hope of satisfying the justice of God, and the power of repaying by penitence the debt of their sins, these again will

eat the sacrificial Lamb, will dye their soul in the crimson blood, and make themselves "conformable to His death" (Phil. iii. 10), that they may regain a whiteness surpassing that of new-fallen snow, and compel the goodwill of the Heavenly Father softened by the sight of the Victim with whom they have identified themselves. By these and every means, the consecrated bread, the wine outpoured, will nourish virtue and allure the human soul to heights of penitence and purity, of light and love. By eating the bread of angels will the Christian become sublime. It was for this that Jesus, even at the horrible risk of coming in contact with the soul of Judas, after saying: "This is my blood," added, "Drink ye *all* of it!"

Lastly, in the Eucharist is consummated between Jesus and His friends a mystery of intimate tenderness and ideal love, of which the Emmanuel alone could have conceived the idea and realised the dream. According to what He had said on a former occasion: "Greater love than "this no man hath, that a man lay down "his life for his friends" (John xv. 13):

and since He would, very shortly, Himself give this greatest pledge, the hour had come in which to raise the act into a sacrament.

For three and thirty years He had "visited the earth"; the moment had now arrived in which to "plentifully "water it" (Ps. lxiv. 10). The poor had had the gospel preached to them (Matt. xi. 5); but it still remained to Him to fulfil the prophecy: "The poor shall "eat and shall be filled: and they shall "praise the Lord that seek Him; their "hearts shall live forever" (Ps. xxi. 27). Thus were all the wonders of His mercy and of His love united in one memorial, one supreme effort (Ps. cx. 4, 5). "How good and pleasant a thing it will "be from henceforth to dwell together in "unity like brethren!" (Ps. cii. 1). Supreme love is the streaming forth, the mingling of the soul; the feast of the Eucharist, in which the love of Jesus communicates itself, will from henceforth reunite in a common tenderness every soul animated by the same impulses, captivated by the same beauty. From henceforth "the chalice of benediction"

(1 Cor. x. 16) will pour one and the same intoxication into faithful hearts. "He that eateth my flesh . . . abideth "in me" (John vi. 57); in like manner all who receive the sacrament of my Body, "shall find themselves really "summed up into one" (John xvii. 11). They will begin even in this world to drink of the torrent of love which is the unspeakable joy of the elect. They will slake their thirst with this same miraculous wine in the kingdom of the Father (Matt. xxvi. 29).

It was imperative that the prophecies should be fulfilled, and that God should "hold magnificently to His word."

And that is why the God so ardently longed for by humanity, called by many eager sighs, He who was called "Emanuel, "that is, God with us," did not desert us at the moment when all blessings were to flow out to the world with His shed blood. He who has been from the beginning, who has been seen upon earth, whom human ears have heard speak, human eyes seen, human souls contemplated, and hands touched, called to His remembrance the accents of love with which His friends had said:—

"Stay with us, because it is towards "evening, and the day is far spent." Therefore He prepared His table, He broke the bread, and mingled the wine, saying :

"Come, eat my bread, and drink the "wine which I have mingled for you, and "live!" (Prov. ix. 5, 6).

And those who have been thus called sing, and will sing till the end of time :

"O blessed feast! of which Christ is "Himself the nourishing food ; banquet "where everything is a reminder of His "passion, where the soul is steeped in "grace, and the pledge of future glory "is given to us!"

A remarkable proof of the love inspired by the Divine Sacrament, from its very commencement, was given by the apostles themselves. After having fled from Gethsemane and from Calvary ; after having thus shown that the most poignant scenes of the holy life and death were powerless to hold them captive ; a heaven-born instinct guided them to the room of the Last Supper. There they were assembled, seeking to live over again in spirit that never-to-be-forgotten

evening when the Saviour appeared to them after His resurrection (John xx. 19).

It is undoubtedly in the Eucharist that the wonderful fruits of the Passion are gathered, both in heaven and on earth. It pertained to the true Unchangeable Priest, sole owner of the eternal Victim, which was His very Self, to institute and to consummate the Divine Sacrifice. He must do that in the very act of His Passion. None other but He had the right to dispose of the treasures of His grace in the "New Testament." Never would humanity have dreamed so wonderful a means for rendering accessible, for all time and to all mankind, a crucified body and shed blood. After so great a marvel, if God willed to do still more, there remained to Him nothing but to open the skies and show to thirsting human souls His unveiled beauty. For according to the saying of St. Augustine on the Eucharist:

"Though He was infinitely wise, He "was not able to do better; though He "was infinitely powerful, He could not do "more; though He was infinitely rich, He "had nothing more to give!"

On the night of the Last Supper, then, He really, as St John said, "loved His "own unto the end" (John xiii. 1); that is, to the extremest limits of love to which the omnipotence of a God can reach.

The Agony

The Night

A SCENTED and star-lit evening unrolls itself above the slumbers of Judea. As Christmas night had been harsh and bleak, so this night of April 2, A.D. 33, was soft and balmy. The night of the Eucharist had its mystery no less than the night of the Incarnation, and each revealed it to the other (Ps. xviii. 3). It was appropriate that the Man of Sorrows, born in the harshness of winter, should die among the first smiles of spring.

During many hours cheerful songs of the *Hallel* had resounded through the houses of Jerusalem. Nothing intoxicated the people of God so much as the blood of the Passover. On every side were banqueting halls, decorated and gay; everywhere hymns and lights. The paschal lamb, roasted and fastened cross-wise on two boughs of pomegranate,

had been served; the three traditional cups of wine passed from hand to hand with ever-growing enthusiasm. The confused murmur of voices, which floated through the open doors and windows, had mingled with the light-hearted songs of outsiders obliged to encamp in the open and feast round fires lighted in the streets. Then, little by little, peace had descended on the city. The Galileans, who had pitched their tents on that side of Jerusalem towards Cedron, rolled themselves in their burnous of wool or hair, and slept round the now expiring brasiers. Silence began to reign abroad, as an ecstacy of earth before the serenity of the sky.

It was then that a man stole out, furtive, agitated, from the house where Jesus was finishing His repast, and hurried to the house of the chief priest. Inaudible voices pursued him; the shadows seemed to thrust out invisible hands to stay him. The night breeze whispered in his ear scraps of phrases which came back to him with the pitilessness of remorse, making him blanch and grind his teeth.

"With desire have I desired to eat this "pasch with you . . . No, Master, thou "shalt never wash my feet . . . You are "clean, *but not all* . . . He that eateth "bread with me shall lift up his heel "against me . . . One of you shall "betray me . . . Lord, is it I? . . . He "that dippeth with me in the dish . . . "The Son of Man indeed goeth, as it is "written of him, but woe to that man "that betrayeth him . . . It were better "for him had he not been born . . . "Master, is it I? . . . Thou hast said . . . "My body yielded up, broken, crushed ". . . My blood poured out for you . . . "In memory of me . . . The hand of "him that betrays me . . . Woe to "the traitor . . . What thou doest, do "quickly."

Judas who, in imagination, already felt the rope round his neck, with gnawing conscience and throbbing temples quickened his steps, and hid himself in the darkness.

But the hour had come for Jesus also to leave the scene of the Last Supper. The evening of this day was also the evening of His life. At the very thres-

hold of His love-feast death awaited Him in its most hideous guise.

So He sang, for the last time in this world, His hymn of thanksgiving (Matt. xxvi. 30). His lips have consecrated, and rendered unspeakably touching for us, this traditional prayer (Ps. cxiii.-cxviii.), of which all the prophetic passages applied to His present condition with painful truth :

" The mountains skipped, the torrents " drew back in horror, the earth was " moved, and why? . . . The nations " will no more say: Where is God? . . . " Silver (the thirty pieces of silver!) is " worshipped, those who are given up to " this idol are like unto it: they have a " mouth and will say nothing (to deliver " the innocent); they have eyes and will " not see; they have ears and will hear " nothing; they have a sense of smell, " and will not know how to discern; " they have hands that may not be " stretched out, and feet that they may " not advance; the protestations and " cries of their conscience are strangled " in their throat! There is no hope for " them but in the Lord. . . . I love to " think that the Lord hears the cry of

" prayer . . . but behold! the sorrows
" of death encompass me, and the snares
" of hell will overthrow me. Behold
" trouble and sorrow, O Lord! deliver
" my soul; O thou who art the keeper
" of the little ones and the weak, God of
" pity, grant me peace: relieve my soul
" from death, my eyes from tears, my
" feet from falling . . . I am humiliated
" without measure, I am a prey to un-
" speakable anguish . . . O Lord, I am
" the son of thy servant! Thou wilt
" break my bonds and I will offer to thee
" the sacrifice of praise . . . Unite with
" me to praise God, ye nations of the
" earth, for the reign of mercy and of
" eternal truth is about to be estab-
" lished . . . Sing the goodness and
" mercy of God! Every evil will be
" joined together against me: they will
" surround me like bees; they will burn
" me as fire burneth a hedge of thorns
" . . . they will push me, and I shall
" fall: but the hand of God will raise
" me up. My strength shall give him
" glory . . . I shall not die but live!
" . . . Open to me the gates of justice:
" all the just shall pass through them

"after me . . . the stone rejected by "the builders will become the corner-"stone . . . Blessed be He who cometh "in the name of the Lord! . . . You, O "mankind, will make the day which is "about to dawn the most solemn day "in your temples; therefore bless ye the "Lord, for He is good and merciful!"

One by one the torches were extinguished, the prophetic voice failed: Jesus had crossed the threshold, and taken the road to Cedron. Thus He passed from the room of the Last Supper to Gethsemane, from the splendour of light to the horror of darkness.

It was His custom to find His way to Gethsemane after the evening meal. The gospel has remarked this detail (Luke xxii. 37), thanks to the practice of which, the traitor knew where to come to find his Victim (John xviii. 2). There Jesus was among His family tombs. Close beside the spot traditionally assigned to the Agony, is still to be found a sort of cave where rested the remains of Joachim and Anna, and where the body of the Virgin Mary would await its Assumption. From the facts, we may reasonably assume

that the villa of Gethsemane belonged to the family of Jesus; probably to the sister of the Blessed Virgin, Mary, wife of Cleophas, mother of James, Jude, Joseph and Simon, and second daughter of Joachim and Anna. Prayer is easy near the beloved dead; the sleep of the departed makes the living dream, especially when the living have, like Jesus, but one dream—to die.

And truly to die was the one dream of His life. He had come into the world saying to Eternal Justice, who sought a victim, Here am I! He had spoken of death as *an ambition* of the future. "My hour," He said with a sigh, "is not yet come" (John ii. 4). He called the moment of death "His hour" above all hours. He saluted death as the herald of joy to come, and would not accept honour before men and before God but from the hand of death (Matt. xvii. 9). In His impatience to possess and be possessed by death, He had willed to foretaste something of it at the institution of the Eucharist (Heb. ii. 9); and He found it good. Was it not the redemption of those to whom

He had given His heart from His mother's womb? One day martyrs would sigh for death and say, like St. Laurence in sight of the instruments of his torture, "I thirst for this feast! "There is not a starved, parched being "who craves for food and drink as I long "for these torments!": like St. Agatha to Quintin, "Why do you delay? What "are you waiting for? Flog, tear, burn, "cut, mutilate, kill this body! the more "you crucify my flesh, the happier you "will make me!"

Even these did not bear in their hearts so burning a love as Jesus, the King of those who die for love, and drink long draughts of divine voluptuousness from the martyr's cup. And so, Jesus, thirsting for death, went often to pray in the Garden of Gethsemane, among the graves, dreaming that death would come there to find Him and lead Him to Calvary.

On this evening of Holy Thursday, He went there, penetrated more than ever with a joy of death, for the "hour" was come.

In order to reach the Garden it was necessary to descend to Cedron, and from

thence climb a little way up the opposite side of the Valley of Jehoshaphat. The night was clear and mild. The air had not yet its early morning freshness; the fires of the Gentiles were dying out along the route, an indefinable sadness was in the air. Instinctively the disciples drew nearer to the Master. And never had He spoken to them more lovingly, more tenderly than now, continuing the discourse of the Last Supper, as recorded by the beloved disciple:—

"My little children, yet a little while "am I with you . . . Love one another "as I have loved you . . . Let not "your heart be troubled . . . Whatso- "ever ye shall ask that will I do . . . I "will not leave you orphans: I will come "to you . . . I am in you, and you in "me . . . If any one love me, he will "keep my word, and my Father will love "him, and we will come to him, and "make our abode with him . . . Peace "I leave with you, my peace I give unto "you! Let not your heart be troubled" (John xiv.).

The darkness had become more silent,

the stars were watching, and, doubtless, the night breeze held its breath amid the agitated leaves, while Jesus, His heart overflowing, continued:

"The Father hath loved me, I also "have loved you . . . These things have "I spoken to you, that my joy may be "in you, and your joy may be filled . . . "Greater love no man hath than this, "to lay down his life for his friends . . . "You are my friends, if you do the things "that I command you . . . I have not "called you my servants, but my friends, "because all things whatsoever I have "heard of my Father I have made known "unto you . . . I have chosen you . . . "I command you that you love one "another . . . You shall give testimony "because you are with me from the "beginning . . . Now I go to him that "sent me, and none of you asketh me, "Whither goest thou? . . . Sorrow hath "filled your heart . . . Be of good cour-"age: it is expedient to you that I go; "for if I go not, the Paraclete will not "come to you . . . You shall be made "sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be "turned into joy . . . The hour cometh,

"and is now come, that you shall be "scattered every man to his own, and "shall leave me alone" (John xv. 9-16, 2).

Such were the words which Jesus said to the eleven, as He withdrew from Jerusalem. As they descended lower and lower into the lonely valley, the oppressive silence seemed to rise towards the heavens, holding them breathless. Arrived at Cedron, the Saviour drank of the stream, and, lifting His head, began to speak softly, sadly, to His Father:

"Father, the hour is come . . . I have "glorified thee on earth; I have finished "the work which thou gavest me to do ". . . I pray for them whom thou hast "given me . . . Father, keep them . . . "I have kept them and none of them is "lost, but the son of perdition, that the "Scripture might be fulfilled . . . I pray "not that thou shouldest take them out "of the world, but that thou shouldest "keep them from evil . . . I pray that all "may be one, as thou, Father, in me, and "I in thee . . . That the world may be-"lieve that thou hast loved them as thou "hast loved me . . . Just Father, the

" world has not known thee!" (John xvii. 1-25).

His prayer finished, Jesus crossed the brook Cedron (John xviii. 1).

It was now about ten o'clock. The moon had risen above the ridge which dominates the Valley of Jehoshaphat. The cedars and cypresses which were grouped along the banks of the stream and decorated the tombs, stood up black and solemn against the whiteness of the dust and stones. The flickering shadows and rippling brook lent a ghostly, shivering element to the night, and a very real uneasiness dogged the steps of the little company. Perhaps one of the apostles expressed something of this vague fear. Then Jesus said:

" You will all fall because of me this " night, for it is written: I will strike " the Shepherd, and the sheep shall be " dispersed. But after I shall be risen " again I will go before you into Galilee" (Mark xiv. 28).

The warm-hearted, eager Peter was indignant. The Master's mournful words stirred him up, and he protested. One seems to see him suddenly stop short,

and say with a firm tone with an energetic gesture :

" Though all should fall because of thee, " yet not I " (Mark xiv. 29).

Indulgent towards the beauty in that weakness of human nature which presumes too much upon its forces, thinking they may be gauged by its enthusiasm and its love, Jesus replied : " Verily, I " say to thee, this night, before the cock " crow twice, thou shalt have denied me " thrice " (Mark xiv. 30).

Who can know the thoughts that passed through Peter's mind at these words ? Was he sincere ? Had he really a strong and living faith, or was he only boasting, feigning a zeal he did not possess, to flatter his Master and quiet his apprehensions ? Evidently he did not believe the words of the Son of God, for with a certain roughness he contradicted Him flatly a second time. He protested ever more and more vehemently, as one who sought to convince himself. Afraid ! he ! Nonsense ! Let them all come, scribes, Pharisees, Romans, with Judas at their head ! They would soon see if Peter were of the stuff of which traitors and

cowards were made! Had he not a sword (Luke xxii. 38) with which to punish aggressors? . . . No, no, it was taxing them with too much cowardice; Peter and his companions would not allow a hair of their Master's head to be touched. For the matter of that, added the prince of the apostles, "though "I die with thee, I will not deny thee" (Matt. xxvi. 35).

"So likewise said all the disciples," whether it be they were fired by Peter's courageous words, or whether they did not wish to be outdone in protestations as ready as they were empty.

Jesus, saddened, did not reply.

The little company whom this sudden dispute had roused into momentary clamour relapsed into silence; a silence more difficult, more oppressive by contrast. The uneasiness of all had just been increased by the weight of a lie. Slowly they ascended the slope of the Mount of Olives, through the cemetery of Jerusalem. The disciples dared not speak, for Jesus was praying. Doubtless He repeated the prophetic orison of David, pursued along the same road by

the hatred of his enemies, an orison in which one hears, as it were, a vague prelude to the strife of the Agony:

"Lord, hear my prayer . . . the enemy "desires my life . . . I am in the midst "of night (or darkness), amongst the "corpses of this world; anxiety takes "hold upon my spirit; I am conscious "of trouble at my heart . . . my soul is "desolate as a land without water. Haste "thee to help me or I shall fall. Turn "not away thy face, and let me not be "like all the dead gone down into the "grave. Let thy love shine forth in "the dawn which is about to break and "respond to my hopes. Shew me the "path that I must follow . . . Deliver "me from my enemies . . . or rather "teach me to do thy will, for thou "art my God!" (Ps. cxlii.).

The distance between Cedron and the Garden of Gethsemane is but short. As soon as they passed through the garden-gate, Jesus said to the disciples:

"Sit you here, till I go yonder and "pray" (Matt. xxvi. 36), and he pointed to a spot a stone's throw further on, and repeated:

" Stay you here, and watch " (Mark xiv. 34).

He of whom the prophet had written : " I am a fruitful olive tree in the house " of God " (Ps. li. 10), and of whom the Church would one day sing : " Thy name " is as oil poured out " (Cant. i. 2), had at last reached the press-house ; the name Gethsemane being in itself prophetic, for in Hebrew it signifies *The Olive-Press.*

Anguish

THEN the earth was silent, and the heavens astonished (Jer. xi. 12).

While the other disciples remained in the garden, Peter, James and John, invited by the Master, followed Him to the place He had indicated. The most painful, strangely mournful scene was about to be enacted before their eyes.

An inexplicable dejection seems suddenly to weigh upon the Saviour. He is seized with "the horror of a vision "by night, when deep sleep is wont to "hold men. Fear seizes upon Him, "and trembling, and all His bones are "affrighted. A spirit passes before Him, "and the hair of His flesh stands up" (Job iv. 13-15). His brow contracts, His wide-open eyes stare into the darkness with the fixity of terror, while a

look of unconquerable disgust distorts His expressive face. The disciples catch the words, spoken plaintively, in a voice full of tears: "My soul is sorrowful, even "unto death!" (Matt. xxvi. 38).

Never had they seen Him so unnerved: weeping (John xi. 35), troubled (John xi. 33), sighing, yes; but never "sorrowful "even to death"! In their anxiety to sympathise with Him, they seek to sustain Him, to talk to Him; but Jesus checks them, and repulses their offer, as one in the delirium of fever repulses the hand of a friend.

He walks a few paces beyond them, till He stands alone.

We have since learned that which even the three privileged disciples were unable to discern, their eyes being holden.

The hour foreordained by eternal justice had struck, and the "whistle" or "hiss" foretold by the prophet (Is. v. 26) had resounded to the outposts of time and space. A mysterious signal had gone up from the fateful garden, as it were a trumpet-call to the nations. From the east and from the west, from the north and from the south, driven by the four winds of wrath, a

mighty tempest of crimes arose. Huge thunder-clouds of infamy rolled together with deafening crash, shooting out lightnings of impurity and rage, gathered from past, present, future; exhaled from tombs where the dead rotted, waiting for judgment, and from evil consciences, living sepulchres, where crawl the worms that never die.

One day humanity, shrivelling up with dread, will behold the planets dissolve into terrible chaos. They will see the stars rush hither and thither in consternation, and hurtle together in frightful disorder. But Jesus perceived more fearful things than these. Not merely the wholesale destruction of stars, but the conflagration of the sins of a universe. And this appalling tempest was about to break on Him.

The final judgment was not yet; but already a preliminary judgment was preparing (John xii. 31), and, fateful omen! all the abominations of humanity hastened to gather together in the Valley of Josaphat itself!

Every sin of man responded to the summons; the apostasies of the Jews and

the blasphemies of the heathen; Roman orgies and Grecian obscenities; the frenzies of barbarians and the filthy and unbridled lubricities of the Canaanites; the pride of Adam, the envy of Cain, the impudence of Cham, the insolence of Jezebel, and the debauchery of Solomon; all the sediment of the Deluge, the acts of plunder and violence, the lies, perjuries, and prostitutions of the race of which He was making Himself the accursed scapegoat.

All that the depraved knowledge of the sons of Adam, in arms against love and law could produce; every odious, sordid, venomous, nauseous, obscene, and hideous thing that existed; all that flesh exhales, or hell vomits out, rose up, and advanced from the outermost limits of time and space in an immeasurable movement of concentration.

"The Lord had laid on Him the "iniquities of us all" (Is. liii. 6).

And yonder, not knowing where to turn for shelter, under the menace of the terrific downpour, the lowly and defenceless Saviour quivered.

His spotless soul, His pure flesh and

sacred blood, rose in revolt against so much evil, as the defiling flood rolled ever nearer. Deadly fear took possession of His being, wringing His soul. *He*, to be swallowed up in this mire! He who had said, with kingly disdain: Which of you convinceth me of sin? (John viii. 46). He who had wielded the whip so splendidly in the temple; Who had said to the Jews, with noble anger: You have dishonoured me! (John viii. 49). *He* must accept, then, as His inheritance and His due the filth of a universe!

That which, in speaking of weak human souls, we call uncontrollable excitement, possessed the great soul of the Christ. The apostles who were watching Him, astounded, saw Him, tormented by a mysterious thorn (Ps. xxxi. 4), move uneasily to and fro, and change His position, in terror of the invisible peril which hovered over Him. Each of the evangelists has noted a different symptom of this feverish anxiety: "He went a "little further" (Matt. xxvi. 39). . . "He "withdrew away a stone's cast, and knelt "down" (Luke xxii. 41) . . . "He fell flat "on the ground" (Mark xiv. 35) . . . and

finally by a brusque movement, "He "withdrew away from the three disciples" (Luke xxii. 41). Who would give Him wings like a dove to fly away? (Ps. liv. 7). Retreat was impossible (Ps. cxli. 5). No! there was the cave! black in the growing light of the full moon, yawning like a tomb. Perhaps this "clift in the rock" (Cant. ii. 14), would, by its massive walls, protect Him from the foul avalanche that would heap itself on His head. The God-Man plunged into it in desperation. Not even the cries of the damned when "they shall say to the "mountains, Cover us, and to the hills, "Fall upon us" (Os. x. 8), will re-echo the heart-rending cry of His soul, "Whither shall I go, O God, from thy "spirit? or whither shall I flee from "thy face, O Justice?" (Ps. cxxxviii. 7). Never could any accent of human horror express the supreme horror of the Son of the Immaculate Virgin condemned to awful invasion of all human infamy.

Doubtless at that time He repeated the gloomy words of His prophet:

"My loins are full of pain: anguish

" hath taken hold of me, as the anguish " of a woman in labour: I fell down at " the hearing of it, I was troubled at the " seeing of it. My heart failed, darkness " amazed me" (Is. xxi. 15).

" And the Lord God of Hosts said, " Take the cup of wine of this fury at " my hand!" (Jer. xxv. 15).

The immaculate soul of the Master struggled, and was unwilling to drink. His innocent heart and conscience rose in rebellion:

" What profit is there in my blood, " whilst I go down to corruption? (Ps. " xxix. 18). To what purpose wash I my " hands and keep pure my heart among " the innocent? (Ps. lxxii. 13). Try me, O " God; search my heart, examine me, study " my ways (Ps. cxxxviii. 23) and spare me " from the load of crimes committed by " others" (Ps. xviii. 14).

But the implacable Voice insisted: " Take this cup!"

The Sleep of the Apostles

THE apostles could no longer see their agonised Master. Scarcely did they notice several deep groans that came from the depths of the cave. The fatigue and emotion through which they had already passed weighed upon them; their eyes grew very heavy. They heard, as in a confused murmur, the cry of desperation: "My Father, let this chalice pass from "me!" (Matt. xxvi. 39) and then sleep overcame them.

It is difficult to believe, even upon the evidence of Bossuet, that the near approach of death was of itself sufficient to so profoundly agitate Jesus. That from which He begged to be delivered was the sin, not the punishment. He who would, on the Cross, bow His head, as a lamb, beneath the blow of the great death enemy, and so lovingly resign His soul to His Father, did not fear the prospect of death. But He could not, without

hesitation, resign Himself to accepting the responsibility of all the sins of the world; with which, however, He must identify Himself (2 Cor. v. 21) before dying. He would not have been God if death held any terrors for Him; but neither would He have been God if the approach of sin had not provoked an invincible and vehement revolt of His whole being. Saint Hilary says: "To "say that Jesus was afraid to die is un- "reasonable; how would He (in that case) "have been able to drive out fear from the "heart of His apostles, and to urge them "to the glory of martyrdom?" (Book x. *De Trinitate*). Saint Jerome says: "One "ought to be ashamed of the thought that "the Saviour feared death, and that terror "of its torments wrung from Him this "supplication: My Father, let this cup "pass from me!" in the 26th chapter of Saint Matthew. If He resisted, it was only from this hideous communion, the infernal viaticum of depravity and human malice. What had He to fear from the fierceness of men? (Ps. lv. 11). What harm could they do to Him, these creatures of flesh and blood, so weak, so

easy to hurl back into nothingness? There is no need for alarm in the presence of an enemy too weak to be formidable (Ps. lii. 6). That which was really terrible, which saddened Him and broke His spirit, was "the tribulation arising from sinners: the "invasion of iniquity, horrible as the horror "of death when it seizes upon weak souls; "it was the fear and trembling in which "this cloud of darkness enfolded Him" (Ps. liv. 3, 4, 5. 6), beyond which He had nothing more to expect but "the wrath "and the overwhelming terrors of God" (Ps. lxxxvii. 17).

A very appreciable time passed before he could subdue the instinct of holy horror, and submit Himself to His Father s will. All the tragedy of the Agony is summed up in this desperate struggle; sin was about to close with Him, He foresaw the hideous hand to hand fight, and He was afraid. Presently, as soon as the abominable contact is brought about, the strife will be so cruel, and the effort to resist the embrace of evil so frightful, that He will sweat drops of blood. Then, vanquished, outflanked, invaded, steeped to the very marrow in the infamous

torrent, He will bow His head in the shame and unbearable disgust of His condition. The gospels have admirably indicated the gradations of this grievous mystery.

Had the disciples not been sleeping, possibly they might have heard the Master repeating the feverish supplication of the prophet: "Lord, Lord, hear "the cry of my innocence, and lend ear "to my voice! Send down justice from "the throne of thy Majesty, and take "heed of my innocence; thou hast "sounded my heart, thou hast searched "it during the night, thou hast tested "me and hast not found in me any "iniquity." . . .

"I call now upon thee, O powerful "God, who heareth me always; O God "who savest those that trust in thee: "keep me as the apple of the eye; hide "me under the shadow of thy wings and "pluck me away from the crimes which "oppress me and encompass me to take "away my life . . . Swift to pursue, they "enfold me at this moment; they keep "their gaze fixed in the direction of this "earth where I am lying, they watch me

"as a lion impatient to devour its prey
"... Arise, O Jehovah!" (Ps. xvi. 1, 13).

The supernatural storm grew ever more threatening; as the load of iniquities became more imminent, so, in proportion, it appeared blacker, more crushing. Thus was the justice of God inexorable; it was imperative for the consummating of the sacrifice that the Victim should not be spared one pang of anguish.

That human weakness, which feels fear more keenly oppressive in solitude, drove Jesus out of the cave where "the breath "of our mouth, Christ the Lord, is taken "in our sins" (Lam. iv. 20), and urged Him to seek His friends. He came out with worn face and heavy step. He, the consoler of all men, the mainstay of the world, sought to gain a little support from His disciples. Perhaps they who but lately had spoken to Him such strong, courageous words, would give Him in His need cheering sympathy, which indeed brings no real remedy, but nevertheless seems to say: "I am with you!" Too, the eagerness of Peter, the zeal of James, the tenderness of John, would rest His eyes from the frightful vision which

tormented His soul. As He was compelled to accept the abject torture, He would at least see something of the power and love which the sight of His sufferings would excite in the human breast. The apostles—the better portion of mankind, the chosen portion, those who had just communicated, who had received supreme revelations and were aware of the gravity of the hour—and amongst these the three privileged ones, within a few steps of their Master's agony were sleeping profoundly.

Peter was the first to awake. He felt a sense of shame. Scarcely an hour ago he had said: "Though all should fail you, "yet not I!" It was more bitter for him than for all the others to be thus surprised in a humiliating sleep. There was a shade of bitterness, perhaps of mournful irony, in the words Jesus addressed to him: "What! "could you not watch one hour with me?" (Matt. xxvi. 40). Then the memory of Peter's exaggerated and idle assertions coming back to Him, He made a slight and compassionate allusion to them: "Watch and pray, if you would not suc- "cumb to the trial which awaits you. "The spirit is willing—you showed me

"that on the banks of Cedron—but the "flesh is weak" (Matt. xxvi. 41).

And the disciples, confused, and heavy with sleep, knew not what to answer Him (Mark xiv. 40).

Jesus had come seeking a little strength for Himself; He found that instead of receiving, He had still to give.

It was written that neither the heavens nor the earth would comfort Him or share His grief (Ps. lxviii. 21). He had made one more discovery within the limits of human hardship. His personal friends, "those who were necessary to Him" (Job vi. 13) had no comprehension of His anguish, appreciated nothing of its tremendous cost. Whilst His heart was anticipating insult and misery, not one of them was found to "grieve together "with Him" (Ps. lxviii. 21). He was compelled to return to His press, and alone (Is. lxiii. 3); His sole companion the bitter thought that no earthly help would sustain Him in the terrible struggle.

He re-entered the cave, and wept.

"Weeping, He wept long in the dark-"ness, and tears ran down His cheeks, for "that none of those dear to Him were

" present to console him. His friends did " not concern themselves about His aching " soul, and this carelessness was an added " grief " (Thren. i. 2).

The Evangelist who had seen Him weeping at the tomb of Lazarus, and again weeping over the unfaithfulness of Jerusalem, has veiled his face, reluctant to see these tears of agony, bitter past all telling: " My sighing stifles me. This " ground on which I am lying is steeped " with my tears " (Ps. vi. 7) " . . . my " eyes seem to melt by reason of my " crying " (Thren. ii. 11) " . . . Who " will give water enough to my head, " who will make unquenchable the foun- " tain of my eyes ? " (Jer. ix. 1) " . . . " From henceforth none can say to me : " Let thy voice cease from sobbing, and " thine eyelids make a truce with tears, " the ransom of thy sorrows is paid " (Jer. xxxi. 16).

And now the storm broke, and beat upon His shrinking humanity ! " War " rained down upon Him " (Job xx. 23). The waves of universal iniquity rushed in upon His soul with indescribable violence. Probably one of the awakened disciples,

struck by His strangely altered appearance, had followed Him to the mouth of the cave and saw Him throw Himself down with His face to the ground (Matt. xxvi. 39); His body bowed by the weight of the "torrents of iniquity which troubled "Him" (Ps. xvii. 5). The hideous duel was beginning. "Evils without number "surrounded Him and overtook Him" (Ps. xxxix. 13). The power of hell, hitherto confined in the lowest abyss, broke loose with the pent-up violence of long restraint. He gasped for breath, as though thrown into a fever by this terrific outbreak (Job xx. 22).

No man, even the most inspired, has ever related the titanic struggle between the archangels Michael and Lucifer. Who then can hope for words divinely epic enough in which to paint the desperate resistance offered by a vanquished God to all the powers of evil drunk with their victory? Our human eyes have wept, our human hearts trembled, at the bloody violence of Calvary: the fight on Olivet was even more cruel. On the Cross a body was pierced: in the cave at Gethsemane a soul, and what a soul! was

pulverised beneath the crushing weight of sin "heavier than a weight of lead" (Zach. v. 8).

One outward and visible sign was intentionally permitted by God to reveal to man the reality and the intensity of the fight. The divine athlete streamed with an abundant perspiration, so abundant that it fell to the ground; and this mysteriously tragic sweat was of blood (Luke xxii. 44).

The Bloody Sweat

AND the blood, the evangelist tells us, "trickled down upon the ground" (Luke xxii. 44.) One could almost fancy on seeing the stream that reddened the ground that the rocks were weeping tears of blood. The earth, hitherto polluted with innocent blood, (Ps. cv. 38) must have greedily absorbed the first drops of that redeeming dew for which four thousand years had waited (Ps. lxxi. 6). This blood which flowed among the shadows was verily "the latter rain" promised by God (Deut. xi. 14). And finally, it was as a voice coming down from heaven, or ascending from the soul of all living and thirsting for redemption: "O earth, cover not thou this blood, neither "let this cry find a hiding-place in thee" (Job xvi. 19).

Jacob's dream in which he wrestled with God, had its counterpart in this nightmare of horror in the midst of

which strove Jesus. What visible powers, what known monsters, can compare with the supernatural enemies of the agonised Son of God?

"Into the midst of this tribulation "which will close upon me more and "more," He said in the words of His prophet, "no one comes to succour me. "Fierce bulls which besiege me, packs "of dogs which assail me, roaring lions "which throw themselves upon me, all "open their mouths against my life: "my bones break, I go down into the "dust of death! (Ps. xxi. 12-17). . . "Behold how at the same time sin pene-"trates me like water, and sinks into my "bones like oil; behold how cursing sur-"rounds me like a sash, and covers me "like a garment" (Ps. cviii. 18, 19).

Thus, in spite of every effort on the part of the Victim, sin overcame Him more and more.

"The holy Jesus," says Bossuet, "saw "himself charged with, and convicted of "more crimes than the greatest criminals "in the world. This Lamb without "blemish was suddenly transformed into "the detested scapegoat. . . The sweetest

" consolation of a harassed man is the " thought of his innocence ; amid over- " whelming evils, and the persecutions of " the wicked, his clear conscience is his " haven of refuge. It was this feeling " that upheld the constancy of the holy " martyrs ; and amid unheard-of tor- " tures which the ingenuity of hatred " devised for them, this sweet remem- " brance soothed their pain and illumin- " ated their hearts and their faces with " holy joy. But Jesus, the innocent " Jesus, did not taste of this sweetness " in His Passion. That which has been " granted to so many martyrs was denied " to the King of Martyrs. He is put " to death, and though shame and tor- " ment are heaped on Him, He is not " permitted to complain, nor even to " cherish a secret thought that He is " being treated with injustice." (Sermon I. on the Passion.)

The Appearance of the Angel

DOUBTLESS it was while Jesus was bowed under the weight of so terrible a prospect, that, to strengthen His human weakness, the archangel Michael, glistening with His everlasting triumph, flashed before the "swollen eyes" (Job xvi. 17) of the Saviour, uttering, perhaps, at the same time the stunning cry:

"Who is like unto God? O Christ, "O sacred dust flung, in spite of thy "innocence, into the mire of evil! O "thou who strivest with agony against "a savage enemy! O thou, whom in- "iquity treads and tramples under foot "as the grapes are trodden in the vat "reddened by the blood of the vine, "remember thy powerfulness! O man, "remember that thou art God, because "if thou art God, who is like unto thee?" (Luke xxii. 43).

And the tempest increased; as in nature, which God made after the like-

ness of the supernatural world, the wind seems to roar more loudly, and become more boisterous, after a lull. Satan, warned by the cry of Michael, that his was but a fleeting triumph, could not but redouble his efforts, knowing that he had but one hour (Luke xxii. 53). Tradition holds that Jesus at this time uttered the heart-breaking cry of the Psalmist:

"Save me, O God, for the waters are "come in even unto my soul. I stick "fast in the mire of the deep; and "there is no sure standing. A tem- "pest hath overwhelmed me. I have "laboured with crying, my jaws have "become hoarse, my eyes have failed. . . "I pay that which I took not away. . . "Hear me, O Lord, for thy mercy is "kind. . . Draw me out of the mire, "that I may not stick fast. . . and out "of the deep waters. Let not the tem- "pest of water drown me, nor the deep "swallow me up; and let not the pit "shut her mouth upon me. . . I am in "trouble, hear me speedily" (Ps. lxviii. 1-18).

But it was not meet that the

Saviour should be saved; and therefore arose on all sides supernatural voices hailing with mockery, horror, or cursing, the mysterious transformation by which the Spotless Being was, according to the saying of St. Paul, "made sin." And a clamour of voices arose on all sides. The voice of hell, "How art thou fallen, "O light-bearer, thou who hadst thy "rising in the pure dawn of thy immacu- "late mother?" (Is. xiv. 12): the voice of earth, "Drive out from Jerusalem "the scapegoat with curses heaped on its "head!" (Lev. xvi. 21). "Cursed be he "that hangeth on a tree!": the voice of heaven, "We have seen Him, despised "and most abject of men. . . a leper, one "struck by God and afflicted" (Is. liii. 3, 4).

Thus He found Himself, like Jonah, helplessly, hopelessly swallowed up. "All "the whirlpools of the storm pass over "this soul, and all its billows break "upon Him. Around Him, the unclean "flood; under Him, the yawning abyss; "above His head, the fury of breaking "waves" (Jonah ii. 3, 6); that is to say, that at one and the same moment He

was a prey to all the fury of sin, of the devil, of eternal justice. "My soul," He was able to sigh, "goes down to the "lowest hell (Job xvii. 16), and my life "is like the life of one damned (Ps. "lxxxviii. 4); all the waves have gone "over me (Ps. xli. 8); Iniquities surround "me so that I cannot see (Ps. xxxix. 13); "they are more numerous than the hairs "of my head, heavier than the heaviest "burden" (Ps. cviii. 18).

It was for this reason that he dared no longer to make His supplication in the somewhat imperative form he had formerly used. He had said: "My "Father, let this cup pass from me." Now He made Himself of less account, humbler, more beseeching: "My Father, "*if it be possible*, let this cup pass; "nevertheless let it not be done accord-"ing to my will, but according to thine!" (Matt. xxvi. 39).

And as malediction continued to howl around His soul, drunken with mire, He for the second time came out of the cave, and went towards His disciples. Perhaps seeing His desperate need they would rally round Him; perhaps they would

speak soft words of adoration and of love which would afford Him relief after the obscene baying of the hounds of hell. With shaking knees (Ps. vi. 3), dishevelled hair (Job iv. 15), and "visage marred" (Is. liii. 5), He came.

The disciples were still sleeping.

And seized with shame, seeing Himself thus impregnated with iniquities, He did not awaken them.

He returned, bowed down by the intolerable load of sin, filled with self-disgust, overwhelmed by shame (Mark xiv. 33). This time He was indeed "seized as a prey by the sins of the "world; He bore them upon His head, "and His heart failed Him" (Ps. xxxix. 16). A nausea rose from His soul "glutted with bitterness, drunken with "gall" (Thren. iii. 15).

He had "swallowed all the muddy "waters of sin" (Job xv. 16), He "whom "lukewarmness alone made to vomit" (Apoc. iii. 16).

O depth of shame! He was so radiant with purity on the day when, pointing to the prostrate and shame-stricken Magdalen, He had said to the

Pharisees: "Seest thou this woman!" (Luke vii. 44); He had showed so beautiful a boldness of authority and virtue, when He said to the adulterous woman who had stood with bowed head before Him: "Woman, no one has con- "demned thee, go, I will not condemn "thee!" (John viii. 10); and it was now His turn to hang His head, to blush, to drink His cup of shame and infamy. The instinct of a God jealous for His honour was in Him, devouring Him and killing Him. "I am afflicted and "humbled exceedingly. I roared with "the groaning of my heart" (Ps. xxxvii. 9). And He was crushed by shame! That shame from which all His life He had prayed His Father to deliver His soul. "O Lord, put me not to shame . . . "Turn away my reproach" (Ps. cxviii. 31, 39). Every day He had cried to Him: "In thee, O God, have I put my "trust, let me not be ashamed" (Ps. xxiv. 2).

Himself the very soul of honour, He had hurled in the face of sinners, as a splendid anathema, this saying: "Be "confounded and ashamed!" (Ezek.

xxxvi. 32). He had trusted to honour His Father (John viii. 49), and was indignant with those who sought to slander Him. And now He was ashamed of Himself: "All day long His shame is "before Him: and the confusion of "His face hath covered Him" (Ps. xliii. 16). He felt that hour approaching in which the sin that had overpowered Him would render Him "the reproach of men "and the outcast of the people" (Ps. xxi. 7). The morrow would reveal to heaven and earth His ignominy. Oh! that the night which now hid Him from view might last eternally!

"O, night of shame, let a darksome "whirlwind carry thee away! Let no one "recognise thee or speak of thee! Let "the stars be swallowed up in thy dark-"ness! Would that thou mightest vainly "expect the day, and that the dawn might "never arise upon thee!" (Job iii. 6-9); "for I am become a reproach among all "my enemies and to my neighbours; and "a fear to my acquaintances. . . . They "that will see me without will flee from "me. . . . I shall hear the blame of "many that dwell round about. . . . Let

"me not be confounded, O Lord, for I "have called upon Thee" (Ps. xxx. 12, 14, 18).

It is expedient here to notice that this pathetic scene in the Garden of Gethsemane reveals to us an aspect of sin which we do not sufficiently recognise. It was not only the executioners, the scourging, the Cross, that were capable of shedding the blood, bruising the flesh, and even causing the death of Jesus. Sin, with which He was at issue, was of itself enough to reduce Him to the lowest depths. There is no one of nobility of character but prefers death to dishonour: sin dishonoured Jesus, and overwhelmed Him with shame. In the words of Bossuet, it caused Him "a killing grief"; and if He did not die, His bloody sweat proved how near death He came, and that He was preserved only by a miracle, that the Scriptures might be fulfilled.

It is true then in the letter, that it is sin that killed Jesus Christ.

But the Saviour had not yet reached the close of the "terrifying visions" (Job vii. 14) of which "the whirlwind

"crushed Him . . . and filled Him with "bitterness" (Job ix. 17-18). The athlete who descends into the arena foresees, through the dust of the strife, the reward of his efforts (1 Cor. ix. 24); the hireling who labours through the burden and heat of the day expects his wages at the end of his toil (Job vii. 2); but this hope was hidden from "the dimmed eyes" (Job xvi. 17) of Jesus. The blood which already flowed to the ground could not quench all the flames of torment, neither could the hammer of the Roman soldiery nail up the yawning gates of the abyss. Even after the spontaneous acceptance of so many horrors, sin would not be "consumed out of the earth" (Ps. ciii. 35), the everlasting curses of heaven would not be silenced, and the painful path which leads to Calvary and to salvation must still remain "the narrow way."

Mankind, having free will, has the power to remain evil, even after the redemption!

And observe this, which has been less noticed and which was incomparably more heinous in the Saviour's sight: the very sinners for whom He was going to die

would not only allow His blood to be spilt, but would themselves, with unheard-of ferocity, rend, kill and mutilate their victim like wild beasts. Well might Jesus weep over the uselessness of His Passion! Would to God that this cup of shame drained to the dregs, this shed blood, might be "without profit" (Ps. xxix. 10) to a great number of sinners! But more terrible even than that, this blood and this shame were to become one condemnation the more. The voices of madmen would soon be shouting: "His "blood be on us and on our children!" (Matt. xxviii. 25). Not content with opposing Him, sin armed itself to "vex "the just soul" (2 Peter ii. 8) of the victim. "He has set me up as a mark "for all His wrath. He hath compassed "me about with His lances. He hath "riddled my flesh with wounds. He has "been without pity. He hath laid bare "my bowels. He hath added wound to "wound. He hath rushed in upon me "like a ferocious giant" (Job xvi. 8-95), "and although all this anger is accom-"plished, my hands being unstained by "one fault. and my prayers unmixed

"with one insincere feeling" (Job xvi. 18), nevertheless the greatest crime the earth has ever consummated, that which sums up all others, will be the crime committed by those who will offer me up as a sacrifice, and my Redemption will be called a Deicide!

Oh depth profound, mystery inexplicable for human thought; unspeakable, lacerating agony for the mind of the God-Man! It was "sorrow above sorrow" crowning the dejection of His soul (Jer. viii. 18).

He saw the "arrows" that were to strike him "preparing themselves each one in "his quiver" (Ps. x. 3), rapacity and lying in the heart of Judas; cowardice in the heart of Peter; fierce and dissembling hatred in the hearts of the Sanhedrin; injustice and dishonourable hatred in the heart of Pilate; pitiless sensual pride in the heart of Herod; brutal violence in those who scourged Him; insults and unreasoning anger in the heart of the crowd; blasphemy in the heart of the soldiers; while His own love, powerless, distressful, vanquished, would remain nailed with Him to the Cross.

Oh bitterness beyond compare! With indescribable mortification must He have re-echoed the hopeless questionings of Job: "Where is now then my expecta-" tion, and who considereth my patience?" (Job xvii. 15).

"The strong wine" (Ps. lxxiv. 9), which in the cup of agony symbolised the blessed souls that would be sanctified wholly through the Redemption; "the strong " mixture" symbolising the fights and falls of those who would be saved "yet so as " by fire"; could they suffice to console the Saviour for the "dregs not emptied," type of the bitter grief caused by the unrepentant deicides?

Once more he makes supplication to His Father. Formerly He had said: "Father, if it be possible" (Matt. xxvi. 39). Now, under the pressure of intenser agony, the cry broke from Him: "Abba, " Father, *all things are possible to Thee!* Remove this chalice from me! . . . Nevertheless, not what I will, but what Thou wilt" (Mark xiv. 36).

Nothing is more touching, more significant, than this change of attitude towards His Father on the Saviour's part, showing

as it does that He had indeed become the most miserable of sinners, "as it were a "leper, struck by God and afflicted" (Is. lxiii. 4).

In His former prayer He had said: "Father, I will. . . . " (John xvii. 24), conscious of His influence with the God who was "well pleased" with Him (Matt. iii. 17). Like a beloved son He asserted His rights as heir: "All Thy things are "Mine" (John xvii. 10), He said. Had not His Father said to Him from all eternity: "Ask of Me, and I will give "Thee the Gentiles for Thy inheritance, "and the utmost parts of the earth for "Thy possession" (Ps. ii. 8)? So sure was He of the fulfilment of His requests that He ofttimes began by giving thanks: "Father, I give Thee thanks that Thou "hast heard Me, I knew that Thou hear-"est Me always" (John xi. 41). But now no trace remains of this divine assurance. His prayers ask an alms, are eloquent of tears, of supplication. Already He is troubled by the sense that His Father's justice can mete out only scorn and wrath for the sins that He has taken upon Himself—that sense which was

to render the moment of death so grievous.

And that which His sacred humanity, wrestling even to blood and tears, could not accomplish, which the shining apparition of the archangel Michael was unable to produce in the mind of Jesus, was obtained by prayers.

What a lesson for our poor, weak humanity, which has no Godhead, no archangels at command!

"Made sin"—though Himself sinless—accursed, His flesh "clothed with "rottenness and filth" of sin (Job vii. 5), Jesus felt His soul revive with sudden unexpected strength. He had accepted the Divine will, and all barriers being thus broken down by resignation, Divine power flashed the light of courage and of hope across the desolation of His soul. His lightened soul broke into song: "I have "confidence in the Lord, My Father; how "can one say to Me: Flee to the top of "the mountain, like a frightened sparrow? "Sinners may bend their bows and prepare "their arrows to strike me in the night; "the eyes of the Lord will not lose sight "of the poor (Ps. x. 2, 3-5) . . . He Him-

" self will lead Me, I shall lack nothing :
" He has restored My soul. . . . Even in
" the shadow of death I shall fear no evil,
" for Thou, O Father, art with Me : Thy
" love and Thy strength sustain Me ; Thy
" consolations are a feast for Me, in the
" face of the persecutions of My enemies.
" Thy favour is a perfume upon My head.
" And from henceforth *this Cup* holds an
" intoxication of glory for Me (Ps. xxii.
" 1, 3, 4, 5). . . . God enlightens Me,
" God saves Me, whom then shall I fear ?
" God watches over My life, before whom
" shall I tremble ? The wicked draw near
" to eat up My flesh ; My persecutors are
" there, *they will be seized with weakness*
" *and fall to the ground. . . . In this cave*
" My glory begins, and here the majesty
' of My brow will subdue My enemies
. . . I shall not be abandoned for ever
" to My persecutors, to the false witnesses
" who will rise up against Me, to the
" iniquity which will entangle itself in its
" own falsehoods, I know that I shall see
" God in the land of the living ; I rely on
" Him ; take courage, my heart, be strong,
" and uphold the God who leans on Thee "
(Ps. xxvi. 1, 2, 6, 12, 18, 14).

Then having thus communed with His Father, he returned to His disciples. From henceforth He had no need of their consolation or help. "Sleep on now," He said to them, "and take your rest: it "is enough; behold the hour is at hand, "and the Son of Man shall be betrayed "into the hand of sinners" (Matt. xxvi. 45).

The Robbers

SCARCELY had Jesus spoken these words when a noise was heard at the garden gate, and a man's voice saying: "Whom-"soever I shall kiss, that same is He; "lay hold on Him and lead Him away "carefully" (Mark xiv. 44). There was a confused babel of voices, a sound of steps hurrying to and fro. The darkness was broken by the flickering light of torches with which people seemed, in every sense of the words, to probe and thoroughly investigate the darkness. The deathly silence which had hitherto reigned in the wooded garden was now succeeded by coarse suggestions and ribald jokes, mingled with the clash of arms and of sticks. Then appeared a great multitude (Matt. xxvi. 4). They were the menials of the priests, scribes, and Pharisees, who followed Judas even while they made game of him and treated him lightly. Could the man who undertook so foul a

task, so cheaply, expect anything less than contempt?

"When darkness falls, and night is "come," the prophet had said, "the wild "beasts go about and roar after their "prey" (Ps. ciii. 20, 21).

The search did not last long; suddenly the red light of the torches, lurid as hell-fires, fell on the benign face of Jesus, and the debased face of Judas.

The traitor did not hesitate (Matt. xxvi. 49). "That thou doest, do quickly," Jesus had said to him at the Last Supper (John xiii. 27). Had he for one instant paused to consider the sweetness and majesty of the Divine countenance, the repulsion and horror-struck gaze of the apostles, he might perhaps have even now drawn back. But he crushed down his remorse, steeled himself against his rising repugnance, and with the sudden blind determination of a suicide he stammered out: "Hail, Master!" (Mark xiv. 45), and kissed Jesus on His lips (Matt. xxvi. 50).

It was written: "Death shall come with "soft words" (Ps. lxiv. 22).

From His immaculate mother, who was more pure than angels, the Divine Child

had received His first maiden's kiss. The Magdalen, glowing and splendid creature, had scarcely dared to cover the feet of the God-Man with her kisses of penitence. All the saints, athirst for eternal love and sighing for the advent of the most beautiful of the Sons of Men, had said: "Let "Him kiss me with the kisses of His "mouth!" (Cant. i. 1). The virgins, martyrs, saints, who have followed His appearing, inebriated with the remembrance of His blood, have worn away by their convulsive embracings and insatiable kisses the wood, the marble, or the bronze, fashioned by men into the likeness of the Crucified. O tears! O grief unutterable! of all who know how to love Him: the most solemn kiss of His life, the only kiss in the history of Jesus which has left an ineffaceable impression, the kiss which will sound throughout the ages in hearts rendered desperate by such desecration, is the kiss of Judas!

And Jesus, who had Himself sighed for the love of humanity, His spouse; who had come to kindle on earth a conflagration of love (Luke xiii. 49); who had said in accents vibrating with Divine warmth

and infinitely caressing: "Lovest thou "Me?" (John xvi. 15, 16, 17); who had accepted, more gladly even than did Jacob for love of Rachel, the misery and hardship of His youth (Ps. lxxxvii. 16), the tenebrous anguish of His agony, the brutalities of the Pretorium and the livid hues of death, all for the winning of love; at the hour of his voluntary consummating of the sacrifice, at the entrance of the way of sorrows, even with His first steps in that way, received at last the kiss so eagerly looked for, so dearly bought.

That kiss was the kiss of Judas.

It was the kiss of lips which had said: "What will you give me, and I will deliver "Him up to you?" The kiss of lips still unclosed after uttering these brutal words: "Take Him and hold Him fast!"

To comprehend more fully the horror of this kiss, we should remind ourselves of the words of S. Francis of Sales, in his *Treatise on Divine Love*: "When two "people kiss they lay their mouths one "upon another in token of a mutual desire "to pour each his soul into the other."

Jesus contented Himself with saying, in the sweet penetrating voice whose charm

had intoxicated so many hearts: "Judas! "betrayest thou the Son of Man with a "kiss!" (Luke xxii. 40). "My friend, "what hast thou done?" (Matt. xxvi. 50).

The venomous reptile recoiled.

It was written: "A soft answer turneth "away wrath" (Prov. xv. 1).

Seeing their leader falter speechless, the satellites of the Temple, themselves disconcerted, hesitated to fall upon Jesus. But He, from this moment firm and determined, and knowing what was to happen (John xviii. 4), came forward a step, and hastening the catastrophe, said to them:

"Whom seek ye?"

They replied: "Jesus of Nazareth."

"I am He," replied the Master (John v. 6).

What changes then passed over the face of Christ? Did His eyes flash with a glance such as will terrify sinners at the last judgment? Did the majesty of His demeanour impress the ribald mob, dominated always by moral no less than physical superiority? The gospels do not tell us. Only the stupendous influence of the Son of Man is remarked upon: "As soon

"therefore, as He had said to them, I am "He, they went backward and fell to the "ground" (John xviii. 6).

"Let them be confounded and ashamed "that seek after My soul. Let them be "as dust before the wind; and let the "angel of the Lord straiten them" (Ps. xxxiv. 4, 5). "Let them be taken to-"gether that seek after My life to destroy "it" (Ps. xxxix. 15). "Let them be pre-"sently turned away blushing that say to "me: 'Tis well, 'tis well" (Ps. lxiv. 4). "The wicked draw near against me to eat "my flesh, my enemies that troubled me "have themselves been weakened and have "fallen" (Ps. xxvi. 2).

This unlooked-for incident restored the courage of the hitherto terrified disciples. They believed that the Messiah would suddenly reveal Himself, and that this change of front on the part of the Master heralded a new period in His marvellous life. Since the enemy had been overthrown by a single glance what was to hinder the completion of so easy a victory?

"Master," they said, "shall we strike "with the sword?" (Luke xxii. 49).

Swift as thought Peter, waiting for no reply, by a clumsy stroke cut off the ear of Malchus, servant to the high priest (John xviii. 10).

But, in much less time than it takes to relate, Jesus had replied to the disciples thus suddenly filled with warlike ardour: "Suffer it to be so" (Luke xxii. 5); had touched the wounded ear and miraculously healed it (Luke xxii. 5); had said to Peter: "Put up the sword into its scab-"bard" (John xviii. 11). "All they who "draw the sword shall perish by the "sword" (Matt. xxvi. 52). "Shall I not "drink the cup which my Father gives "me?" (John xviii. 11). "Thinkest thou "that I cannot ask Him and immediately "see more than twelve legions of angels "appear? How then should the Scrip-"tures be fulfilled, according to which "everything must thus come to pass?" (Matt. xxii. 33).

Doubtless the disciples knew to which Scriptures the Master was alluding. A short time before He had told the three chosen disciples, as they were descending from Mount Tabor (Matt. xvii. 1), how it was written "that the Son of Man must

"suffer many things and be despised" (Mark ix. 11).

The prophet Isaiah had said concerning the Garden of Gethsemane: "All we like "sheep have gone astray, every one hath "turned aside into his own way; whilst "the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity "of us all.

"He was offered *because it was His own* "*will*, and He opened not His mouth; he "shall be led as a sheep to the slaughter" (Is. liii. 6-8).

In the meantime the followers of Judas were becoming more and more undecided what course to follow. How often it had happened that the hirelings sent by the scribes and Pharisees to seize Jesus had fallen under the spell of His majesty and the charm of His speech, and had returned empty-handed, saying: "Never man spake "as this man!" But never up to this moment had Jesus appeared so impressive, at once mighty and gentle. Possibly these paid servants of evil would yet once more have failed to discharge their duty had not some new-comers arrived upon the scene. Uneasy at the prolonged absence of their emissaries a band of chief

priests, scribes, and magistrates of the Temple must have followed to the garden to see what was happening. Jesus saw them, and for the second time put the question :

"Whom seek ye?"

"Jesus of Nazareth."

Jesus replied, addressing Himself especially to them :

"I have told you already that I am "He." And as it was written : "Of all "those whom thou gavest me, I have not "lost one," He added : "Since it is I "whom you seek, let these go their way" (John xvii. 8, 9).

Then the servants seized Him and bound Him. These sinful bonds had been foretold (Ps. cxviii. 61). Whilst He was being bound Jesus, in a grave voice, said to the scribes and elders who were looking on : "You are come to me as to a thief, "with swords and staves. I was daily in "the midst of you, in the Temple, teach-"ing. How is it that you did not take "me then? It is indeed your hour, this "hour of the power of darkness" (Mark xiv. 53).

All this was again the fulfilling of pro-

phecy (Matt. xxvi. 56), and that their fulfilment might be more complete and more striking, the disciples, "the sheep," took to flight and were scattered (Matt. xxvi. 56).

It had indeed been written: "Whilst "these robbers, coming together, traced "out a path to where I was, and sur- "rounded my refuge, my brethren took "to flight, my friends withdrew from me "as though they had been strangers!" (Job xix. 12, 13). "They have de- "parted from me and abandoned me" (Ps. xxxvii. 12; Ps. lxxxvii. 9, 10). "They have disappeared as a frightened "bird, as fledglings that leave the nest" (Is. xvi. 2).

A young man from a neighbouring house, awakened by the tumult, had come, wrapped in a sheet, to see what was happening. The priests' servants seized him, doubtless to make game of him on account of his not too scanty garb: but he left his sheet in their hands and fled, naked (Mark xiv. 51, 52).

What a scene!

How nobly the face of Jesus shines out

against the black background of cowards, hypocrites, and enemies, illuminated only by the fitful glare of torches! Judas shivered with apprehension, the apostles trembled, the murderers hesitated, the onlookers fled; Jesus alone stood with serene face and calm voice. Everything was mean and odious in His environment. Mean, the exaltation of the disciples who, having fought for Him in a moment of childish excitement, and having thus compromised their friend, now flee like cowards. Odious, the attitude of the scribes and priests coming with an unruly mob to take by night and in a solitary place One whom they dared not molest in the daylight.

And then . . . Judas! "whom all the "world spits upon," and who had had the audacious effrontery to say: "Arrest Him, "and hold Him fast!"

The Crisis

The Abduction

THAT night was a night of terror.

While the scattered disciples were escaping towards the mountains, the servants of Caiaphas, satellites of the Temple, with their officer at their head, furtively made off with their prey, slinking like thieves who fear the light of day.

The whole eastern side of Jerusalem, which faced the Garden of Gethsemane, presented a series of very real perils for the rabble of captors. On the heights to the north, Roman sentinels watched from the top of the Antonia Tower, their watchfulness quickened doubtless by the noise in the Garden immediately below them. From the Tower to the suburb of Ophel, all along the right bank of Cedron, the Galileans lay sleeping in their tents, and at the least warning they

would have been ready to trick the enemies of Jesus. And lastly, south of the city, beyond the extreme limits of the Temple, stretched the suburb of Ophel, densely populated with artisans and poor people, the masses beloved of the Saviour, whose simple honest hearts were filled with hatred of the Pharisees and priests, and their servants who cudgelled them on every possible occasion.

The escort was obliged to make a détour in order to evade this array of obstacles. With watchful eye they hurried along in silence. Some of the chief of the priests who were among them, divided between satisfaction at having secured their prey and fear that it might escape them, hustled the men along. Had not Judas himself, who knew better than anyone who were the Saviour's friends, said warningly : "Hold "Him, and lead Him away carefully" (Mark xiv. 44)?

So they dragged rather than led Jesus —already physically crushed by the anguish and bloody sweat of the evening. He was like "a lamb carried to be a

victim" (Jer. xi. 19), and did not hear the whispered proposals of the priests: "At last! we are about to be able to "put wood in His life! He will be "struck off from the number of the liv- "ing, and His name will be forgotten!" (Jer. xi. 19).

Though the Saviour had not yet reached the true Way of Sorrows where He must leave traces of bleeding feet, yet everything on this hurried march seemed to symbolise and remind Him of the coming outpouring of His blood. First the group kept along the bank of the Pool of Siloam, type of the redeeming blood to which one day all moral infirmity would seek for healing; then they passed by the Potter's Field, the Haceldama, type of the Church, Christ's patrimony, bought at the cost of the same precious blood; and lastly, turning towards the north, the Master saw once more the house He had left but a few hours before, where at the Last Supper had been spoken the momentous words: "This is my "blood of the new testament which "shall be shed for many for remission of sins" (Matt. xxvi. 29). A hundred

yards more, and the prisoner was flung into the house of Annas, father-in-law of Caiaphas the high priest of the year (John xviii. 24).

Annas

It was now about midnight.

Annas had preceded Caiaphas as high priest, and had been deposed by the Romans. He was the moving spirit in the conspiracy against Jesus. His age, learning and experience, his wealth and his influential position among the Jews, which a common hatred of the Romans served to increase, made him an even more important personage than Caiaphas. It was far easier for Judas to negotiate with Annas than with his son-in-law, on account of the official position of Caiaphas. And besides, as Annas was playing so leading a part in the whole affair it was quite natural that the prisoner should be taken to his house.

Annas was awaiting with great impatience the outcome of the arrest. At last he would be able to hold and strangle at his ease this miserable and paltry rabbi who had dared to dispute his popularity

and draw away the multitudes. He must have trembled with excitement when the sound of voices and trampling feet announced the return of the emissaries.

They must first have crossed with their prisoner a large hall which connected the street with the inner court. So far as one can gather from the story, this court was in the form of a quadrangle. At one end was the palace where the Sanhedrin were wont to assemble, consisting principally of a vast hall, and of some cells where newly arrested prisoners were temporarily placed; on one side were the apartments of Caiaphas, on the other those of his father-in-law, Annas; facing the palace and the prison cells, at the entrance of the court, was a block of buildings intersected by a large hall communicating with the outer air and set apart for the servants and hall-keepers.

Also those who guided the band would have no difficulty in finding Him, and the Gospel lets us see abruptly, in a touching tête-à-tête, Jesus face to face with the sometime pontiff; thrust in, doubtless, by the hirelings who exulted at the success

of their expedition, and seemed to say to the High Priest with a sigh of satisfaction: "Behold the man!"

Torches were lighted. Beneath His disordered and dusty clothing; beneath the pallor of His face—from which the toil of the way had doubtless removed the last traces of the blood-drops of the agony—the beauty of Christ shone out, a beauty of majesty and gentleness, of strength and of sadness, of patience and of love.

Probably Annas had not hitherto seen Him so near; certainly he had never had Him thus before him, defenceless, and without the support of that public whose glances sustain and embolden by distracting the minds of liars and wrong-doers from the obsession of their conscience. His keen piercing glance, rejoiced at the success of an evil action, met the calm compelling gaze of the Saviour, and was troubled. His hatred towards the Galilean, his contempt of the wanderer, his jealousy of the worker of miracles, which up to this moment had filled his soul and prevented him from sleeping, could not now sustain him in the presence of the Son of Mary,

bound, and abandoned by all His friends. Those who in this very place had witnessed Annas's explosions of fury, and heard his invectives, could not fail to observe his discomposure. They expected insults, or one of those outbursts of frantic delight so common to Eastern temperaments. Instead, came a few haughty questions in the guise of conversation. It was obvious to all that Annas was ill at ease, and that, in spite of His abject appearance, the Son of Man impressed him greatly.

Indeed, so profound was this impression, that he was driven to hypocrisy and feigned a contemptible ignorance. He, who had accused, denounced, and ruined the Galilean by distorting His words and doctrines and the number of His followers; who had for long set spies to watch Him, and had already made all arrangements for His condemnation and death; he now pretended to know nothing about Him, and questioned Him "of His disciples and "of His doctrine" (John xviii. 19).

Jesus did not choose to take this comedy seriously, or to be party to such a farce. And, moreover, the time was past in which

He deigned to speak out to these wretches as they deserved. So he was content just to elude the High Priest's questions, and He also indirectly conveyed a lesson in honour to that false and lying man, saying: "I have spoken openly to the world; I "have always taught in the synagogues, "and in the Temple, whither all the Jews "resort; and in secret I have spoken "nothing" (John xviii. 20).

Annas appeared not to understand. There was much talk in Jerusalem of secret societies. Possibly the members of the Sanhedrin werea ware that some among their number, as for instance Nicodemus, had gone by night, secretly, to hear the teaching of the new Rabbi (John iii. 2). There was no doubt that Jesus had frequently been accused of witchcraft (Matt. ix. 34), and of mysterious relations with Beelzebub (Mark iii. 22). Everyone was aware, without knowing what exactly the phrase meant, that "His "kingdom was not of this world" (John xviii. 36); and more than once His allegorical language which, while clear to some, mystified others, had left an impression that no one could become

His disciple but by an initiation which was withheld from the common herd, those whom He had irreverently styled "dogs" (Matt. vii. 6).

Knowing this, Annas thought he might safely press his point. He tried to turn the tables on Jesus, and to take back from Jesus the ground which the latter had just gained by His reply, the meaning of which, humiliating to the questioner, could have escaped no one. In reality, to repeat the question was tacitly to accuse Jesus of insincerity in His former answer. The Saviour did not accept this insult as it was intended He should. He refused to reply, and contented Himself with giving an unequivocal proof of His veracity. "Why askest thou me?" He said, "if I seek to deceive you, you need not wait to find out the truth from me: if I say the truth, what need to make me repeat the same thing twice? "Ask "them who have heard what I have "spoken unto them: behold they know "what things I have said" (John xviii. 21).

This answer seems to have struck even nearer home than the previous one. For a moment Annas was thunderstruck, then

his anger blazed forth under the sense of the humiliation inflicted on him by this vile Galilean, in the very presence of his own servants. His face changed, and a sudden movement of fury probably warned the bystanders of his awakened wrath. The servants observed it, and one of them —St John Chrysostom names Malchus, who had lately been wounded in the Garden—struck Jesus, crying: "Answerest thou the high priest so?" (John xviii. 22).

The betraying kiss of Judas had paved the way for the blows of the menials; cowardly and brutal malice added its signature to the impress left by treachery. A blow given in a moment of anger would have been far less repugnant, less vile, than this which was dealt a gentle and fettered man to curry favour with a shame-faced priest. Scarcely an hour had elapsed since Malchus "had gone backward and "fallen to the ground" (John xviii. 6) before the glance of Jesus. Struck by Peter's unfortunate sword, he had raised his hand to his ear with a terrified and grotesque gesture, and had not even dared to complain. Jesus alone had shielded him, succoured him, healed him.

Now, when there were neither swords nor staves to inspire him with respect or to protect the prisoner whose hands were bound, he dared to strike Him on the face.

Alas! the work of sin in all its different aspects was manifested in the successive stages of that sad day. Sin is a betrayal; sin is a blow in the face (Luke ix. 26). The Son of Man will be ashamed in the last day; perhaps one cause of His shame will be that sinners have "struck the cheek "of the judge of Israel" (Mich. v. 1).

Jesus had resigned Himself beforehand to every affront. On rising from His knees after His Agony He had said: "I am prepared for blows (Job xiii. 18) ". . . the enemy who seeks me may "take me, crush my life to the earth, and "cast my honour in the mud" (Ps. vii. 6). So He only said quietly to the servant who struck Him: "If I have spoken "evil, give testimony of the evil: but if "well, why strikest thou me?" (John xviii. 23).

Silence followed these words. Annas, though beside himself with rage, felt that such violence was disgraceful. The valet

almost met with disapproval. The general embarrassment was obvious. And to crown all, the advantage in this interview between the pontiff and the Galilean seemed to be increasingly on the side of Jesus. It was time to put a stop to an embarrassment which threatened to become overwhelming and which needed little to completely rout Annas. This most self-sufficient and expert of the Sanhedrin had not been happy in the manner of his *début.* He now brought this annoying scene to a close by giving orders to lead Jesus to the house of Caiaphas, his son-in-law, with instructions that he should examine and prepare the case against the accused.

The Apostate

JUST about this time a general movement took place in the inner court. It is well known that in Palestine the air, though mild during the early part of the night, grows sensibly colder towards dawn. The majority of the servants and hangers-on of the priests who had taken part in the arrest of Jesus had remained in the vestibule leading into the inner court, those among the servants who had not been sent on the expedition joining them there to hear the news. Both those who were heated by their hurried excursion, and those who were still moist from their first sleep, shivered in the chill dawn. A brazier was brought and lighted (Luke xxii. 55), and the servants, some crouching in Eastern fashion (Luke xxii. 55), some standing, gathered round the glowing coals discussing the incidents of the night. The red glow which shone on these outstretched hands, and lit up these

hard faces, must have created an impression as of the infernal regions. Was it not in this accursed house that "the mouth "of the abyss" would yawn? (Apoc. ix. 2); was it not from thence, from the heart of this darksome den that hell would vomit forth upon the righteous its terrible wrath?

Peter, after his first hasty flight from Gethsemane, restless and uneasy had retraced his steps. Guided by the flaming torches, he had been able to follow the *cortège* through the Valley of Josaphat. One other disciple, some say the apostle St John himself, had joined him, and together they went to the house of Caiaphas. The disciple knew the servant at the door; and besides he would have had no difficulty in entering with the crowd of satellites. But Peter, fearful of recognition, remained outside (John xviii. 16).

However, Jesus having passed into the presence of Annas, the disciple had seen a certain measure of calm re-established in the hall, and the servants take up their places indifferently enough round the fire. The most dangerous, the leaders, had probably followed Jesus into the high priest's

apartments. The disciple thought that he might, without danger, bring in Peter, who was cold outside, and who must also have keenly wished to see and hear everything that passed. So he "went out and spoke "to the portress and brought in Peter" (John xviii. 16). Peter walked quickly through the hall, always dreading recognition as one who had been with Jesus in the Garden, and took his place behind the groups round the brazier, on the side nearest the court. Thus he found himself practically out of doors. But from where he stood he could, by turning his head, see everything that passed in the court; and he had only to stretch out his hands for the heat of the fire to warm them.

And now that he had drawn near the fire, more than one keen and curious glance was cast on his face illuminated by the glow from the hearth. Much more absorbed in what was passing in the court behind him than in the conversation of those around him, he had not noticed the effect his presence had upon them, till, with stupefaction he heard a woman cry out: "But that man was with the "prisoner!" (Luke xvii. 56).

Just as he was about to deny it, the portress, whose responsibility was engaged, asked him point blank: "Art not thou "also one of this man's disciples?" (John xviii. 17).

"No, no," he replied.

"Yes," continued another maid who came up at this moment by the court (Mark xiv. 66) and scrutinised him: "thou wast with Jesus of Nazareth!" (Mark xiv. 66). Peter denied it in a surly voice: "I neither know Him nor under-"stand what you wish to say to me!" (Mark xiv. 68).

At that moment, even as the cock crew, the attention of everyone was arrested by a movement in the court. Jesus was being led from the apartments of Annas to those of Caiaphas. The chief priests, scribes and Pharisees appeared from all directions, in answer to a hasty summons, and joined in the procession to Caiaphas. Some had been already within the palace, others came in from outside, hustling the servants and breaking up the circle round the brazier. Under cover of the general confusion Peter escaped, and was lost in the dimness and bustle of the inner court.

The scene in the hall where Caiaphas sat in council with the Sanhedrin was one of great animation. Obliged by law to wait for daylight before they could be formally recognised as a court of justice, they were discussing among themselves the surest means by which they might so entangle Jesus in a net of accusations as to render escape impossible (Ps. xxxvi. 32). The entrance, therefore, of Jesus served as a stimulus to their ardour.

"They surrounded Him without con-
"sideration for His resigned and gentle
"bearing, without pity for the solitude to
"which He was reduced, crushing Him
"with haughty and spiteful conversation.
"One would have compared them to lions,
"which, having watched their prey from
"the depth of their cave, at last seize upon
"it" (Ps. xvi. 9, 10, 12).

Every scheme which duplicity and envy could invent was brought forward. Each one expounded his plan and made his statement. Unanimous in their hatred they had the impudence to prepare, in the very presence of their victim, the calumnies by which they designed to ruin Him (Ps. xl. 8, 9).

They no longer dissembled their desire to see Him as speedily as possible dead and buried in oblivion (Ps. xl. 6).

However, ingenious as were their accusations, since insinuations of tendency would not suffice for a judgment in due form, that which was still wanting was facts, and, consequently, witnesses.

The prophet David had announced: "They will not draw back before iniquit-"ous statements, and they will incriminate "His pretension to resurrection" (Ps. xl. 9). The prophet must be borne out by this crowd, as imbecile in its rage as it was skilful and perverse in its hypocrisy.

One false witness succeeded another (Matt. xxvi. 60), but sometimes the offence complained of was not punishable by death (Matt. xxvi. 59), and sometimes the witnesses contradicted each other. At last two wretches—the last resource of the Sanhedrin—witnessed that Jesus had said: "I am able to destroy the "temple of God, and after three days to "rebuild it" (Matt. xxvi. 61).

The prophecy of David was fulfilled; it was in these words that Jesus had foretold the resurrection of His body (John ii. 19).

It appears that, among the Jews, prediction of the ruin of Jerusalem and of the Temple was an offence punishable by death. For having made a similar prediction Jeremiah, who, in his sufferings, prefigured the Saviour, had been seized by the priests and prophet at the demand of the people, who cried: "Let him be "put to death!" (Jer. xxvi. 8, 9).

The chief priest, at his wits end, and for lack of any better evidence, thought it wise to make sure of this last accusation. He therefore put several questions to the two witnesses with a view to establishing facts, so that their deposition could be used as the basis of a sentence of death.

Unfortunately these two liars, bribed no doubt out of the same cash-box from which had been taken Judas' thirty pieces of silver, so confused and contradicted their statements that it became impossible to make one agree with another. "Iniquity is taken in its own falsehoods" (Ps. xxvi. 12).

Meanwhile the night was waning. The group of servants had gathered afresh round the brazier. Peter standing with

them, and feeling somewhat reassured, drew nearer to the fire, and consequently to the light (John xviii. 18). And while within the house of Caiaphas the enemies of the Saviour flinched from making no statement, however audacious, the following pitiable dialogue was taking place between the servants of the Pontiff and one who for the time being represented belief in and attachment to the Christ :

A maid-servant said, pointing to Peter : " Certainly that is one of them ! " (Mark xiv. 69). " Thou art one of them, added " another " (Luke xxii. 58). And Peter replied to the latter : " Man, I am not ! " (Luke xxii. 58).

But one maid-servant, who appeared better informed than the others, was not afraid to contradict him, affirming " that " he was with Jesus of Nazareth " (Matt. xxvi. 71).

This was very grave testimony ; the fact of his presence with Jesus was no longer insinuated only, but was positively and clearly asserted. Peter, disconcerted, protested with an oath : " I know not this " man of whom you speak " (Mark xiv. 70).

Then several of those who were standing near, not quite knowing which to believe, put the question directly to Peter: "Yes or No, art thou one of this man's "disciples?" (John xviii. 25). "Peter "replied: No."

Meantime Caiaphas, disconcerted by the blundering of the witnesses, who were not wanting in assurance, rose, and standing in the midst of the excited and gesticulating members of the Sanhedrin asked Jesus, saying: "Answerest thou nothing to these accusations?" (Mark xiv. 68).

But Jesus held his peace.

Why indeed should He reply? Since in that hour apostacy was speaking in the person of Peter, lying in the person of the false witnesses, hatred in the person of Caiaphas, was it not seemly that virtue, truth, and justice should be silent? And, moreover, one word from Jesus would have given too good a chance to Caiaphas, who would not have hesitated to twist it into an admission, made this time before many witnesses. From the moment in which Jesus had declared His mission here below His words had been systematically taken hold of to convict Him of impos-

ture and an endeavour to lead others astray.

And, too, the repeated denials of Peter oppressed Him and overwhelmed Him with sadness. The prophet David, speaking for the Saviour, had said:

"My heart is troubled, my strength "hath left me, and the light of my eyes "itself is not with me. My friends and "my neighbours have drawn near, and "stood against me. And they that were "near me stood afar off: and they that "sought my soul used violence. And "they that sought evils to me spoke vain "things, and studied deceits all the day "long. But I, as a deaf man, heard not: "and as a dumb man not opening his "mouth. And I became as a man that "heareth not: and that hath no reproofs "in his mouth" (Ps. xxxvii. 11-14).

It was fitting that the Redeemer should hold His peace, and add to His willing sacrifices this other of not justifying Himself, that He might buy back the falsehood and perjury of those who sacrifice truth and justice to their cowardice or their selfishness. There are those from whom interestedness or fear drag forth words

which are prevarications or crimes. Could it be that this detestable failing in human language could fail to find place in the saddest chapter in the history of human weakness—the denial of Peter?

A sort of fatality of ill-fortune seemed to follow St Peter. Twice he had been in imminent peril of discovery; twice the apparent sincerity and above all the violence of his denials seemed to have convinced the puzzled and inquisitive men and maids. Their suspicions were disarmed by the second denial, which was even more emphatic than the first had been; and not only had the reassured Peter continued to take advantage of the fire, but, a certain familiarity having been established, thanks to the foregoing dialogues, he believed himself in a position to take part in the conversation. But scarcely had he uttered the first few words ere his accent and the familiar expressions of his country betrayed him unequivocably.

Instantly the insistent accusations recommenced: "Surely thou art one of "them; for thou art a Galilean," cried one (Mark xiv. 70); while another added:

"That cannot be disputed, thy accent is "a proof amounting to evidence" (Matt. xxvi. 73). A third said: "Then he was "with Jesus since he comes from the "same country" (Luke xxii. 59). Peter struggled to regain his lost footing, answering this one with cursing, that one with an oath (Mark xix. 70), a third with invective: "Man! thou knowest not what "thou sayest" (Luke xxii. 60); trampling his faith and his promises ruthlessly under foot. Suddenly one of the group, who was related to Malchus and had been present at the arrest of Jesus, changed Peter's uneasiness into terror by this question, the most alarming of all: "Did "I not see thee in the garden with Him?" (John xviii. 26).

At this, Peter could contain himself no longer. He denied with an oath that he knew Jesus. With the same vehemence with which he had said: "I am ready to "die with thee!" he now began to swear, mingling profane contempt with perjury: "I know not this *man* of whom you speak" (Mark xiv. 71). "He denied with an "oath" (Matt. xxvi. 72). "He cursed" (Mark xiv. 72) . . . the phrases used by

the evangelists to describe the scene are terrible, and make one shudder.

Cowardice is always deplorable and contemptible ; but when it clothes itself in unbridled ferocity, which communicates to it the bestial instinct of self-preservation and urges it to the uttermost, it is overwhelming, and produces in the minds of those who witness it a feeling akin to stupefaction.

It was probably at this moment that Caiaphas, hopeless of overcoming the silence of Jesus, and knowing that his presence was of little use before daybreak, ordered Him to be taken to one of the cells adjoining the Hall of Justice. It must now have been rather after three o'clock in the morning. Jesus crossed the court for the second time. His most painful thought at that time being Peter's denial He turned His head, as He passed the vestibule, and looked at His apostle (Luke xxii. 61) with the glance that causes hearts to melt. At the same moment the cock crew (Matt. xxvi. 74). Peter saw, heard, and remembered (Matt. xxvi. 75). An indescribable emotion shook his very soul. He fled, weeping (Matt. xxvi. 75 ; Mark xiv. 72).

Men have ever tried, each according to the trend of his sympathies, to either over-rate or under-state St Peter's culpability. It is true that his apostacy is as abominable, as revolting, as anything one can imagine; but it is also supremely human. In the fearful conflict of the Passion it was imperative that the Saviour should grapple with sin under all its different aspects. Under no other circumstances had such a mass of human iniquities been represented. It was imperative that all iniquity should be able to follow the footsteps of the patient Christ, and to meet with itself, here and there, under appearances which would compel it to exclaim : Truly, I was there ! However numerous be the traitors and false brethren who devastate and dishonour the great Christian brotherhood, those who desert the Church through stupidity, who disguise "the faith that is "in them" through timidity, who betray God's cause through cowardice, far outnumber them. Among the followers of Christ are many more Peters than Judases.

Truly it is a heart-breaking thing that there are so many who are capable of deserting their duty !

When placed, as was Peter, between the most sacred duty owed to fidelity and love, and the most abject of temptations; between a gentle and lovable heart, sad and noble countenance, as were those of Jesus, and a coarse foul mob composed of Jewish serfs; between the most admirable and the most painful cause of justice and honour that the world has ever known, and the most cynical and revolting oppression; between a martyr who gave royally of His love and of His life-blood, and those who thirsted to drink that blood, never doubting that to do so was to commit a most foul crime; when one finds oneself placed between this and that, with a free choice, and with full ability to cry aloud the name of the Belovéd whom one would follow, it is sad, it is appalling, to think that one may be found capable of saying with Peter: "I "know not *this man*!"

Peter fled, weeping; as a man who shudders at himself, and whom remorse relentlessly pursues.

The face of the deserter becomes the face that weeps. He had let slip an opportunity, unique in martyr's history, of giving his blood. He gave his tears.

Tradition teaches that he did not cease to weep from thenceforward to the hour of his death. Two furrows, the two scars of repentance, were ploughed in his cheeks by his tears. St Clement, who knew him, says that he conceived an intense horror of everything resembling falsehood; the recollection of the perjuries and lies of that terrible night haunted him always. He charged St Mark to perpetuate in a strictly detailed account the remembrance of his falling away. He fancied that to confess his bitterness of soul and to publish the misery of his life would help to expiate his sin. And Jesus, touched with divine compassion, gave to this crushed soul, bowed down with shame and penitence and love, this mission in life: "to "strengthen his brethren who were weak "in the faith;" and confided to him the sovereign ministry of indulgence and of pardon! (Matt. xvi. 19).

The Cruelties of the Crowd

DAY was now beginning to break. As the dread hour approached the human tigers became more ferocious. The moral influence of the accused, which seemed ever in the ascendant over his enemies, provoked also in them a growing irritation. Moreover, the crowd by this time realised that Jesus' fate was sealed beforehand and that He was already doomed to death. There was then nothing to fear, and therefore more to care about. They held bound the man of whom hitherto they had scarcely dared to touch the garments or kiss the feet. Now His body was theirs to outrage. He was in their power, the prophet who for three years had stirred Judea, and before whom even their own unprincipled masters, forced into a show of respect, had trembled with impotent rage. This was the man whom the Pharisees had invited to sit at meat with them, before whom the Roman cen-

turion had bowed the knee, whom the crowds had hailed with acclamation. The rabble could not allow such honours to go unpunished. Such pride called for vengeance. Never before had the desire to handle roughly and to mock at met under such auspicious circumstances. And so, while the scribes and priests deliberated, the warders of the prisoner applied themselves joyfully to their task (Luke xxii. 63).

They hustled Him; they mocked Him; they spit on that sacred face before which the angry sea had sunk to rest (Luke viii. 34), and the sun would shortly be darkened (Matt. xxvii. 45). Blows rained upon that brow from which shone the "brightness of the Father's glory" (Heb. i. 3). They heaped insults upon Him, and struck Him in the face with their shameful fists. Isaiah had foretold all these outrages: "I have given my body "to the strikers, and my cheeks to them "that pluck them: I have not turned "away my face from them that rebuked "me and spit upon me. The Lord help-"ing me, my face has seemed insensible "as a most hard rock" (Is. l. 6). It did

not suffice for these wretches of the lowest order to spit and to strike. Hell was at the back of them, searching for something higher and more divine in the victim, that the sacrilege of their jesting might be more direct and more explicit. The servants, therefore, threw some cloth over the sacred head that they might amuse themselves more offensively with the prophet; they struck Him, then amidst shouts of laughter and innumerable blasphemies (Luke xxii. 65), they said: "Dost thou guess, O Christ, who struck thee?" (Matt. xxvi. 67, 68).

And the Saviour was glad to endure these outrages as a proof of the measure of His patience and of His love for us.

But now day had fully dawned.

"The day of slaughter, of treading down, "and of weeping" (Is. xxii. 5).

At a signal from Caiaphas all the members of the Sanhedrin who were present assembled in conclave in the hall of justice. The longed-for hour had been only too eagerly awaited. Then the order was given to introduce the lamb into the den of wild beasts. Grave Justice licked its lips in anticipation of the bloodshed which

the day promised, for the decision was already made that Jesus should be condemned to death (Matt. xxvii. 1). The mother synagogue "gathering together "fury," "grinding her teeth" against the accused, and beholding Him "with ter- "rible eyes" (Job xvi. 10), awaited with wolfish impatience the approaching moment in which she would see quivering on the Cross the hated flesh, in which she would drink with frenzied joy the accurséd blood.

The venerable priests, majestic thieves, seated themselves upon divans. Jesus was led in, bound, His face worn and dull, but with mild eyes. An indefinable trouble was written on His countenance, as if His conscience were but ill at ease. "My "wrinkles bear witness against me, and a "false witness riseth up against my face "contradicting me" (Job xvi. 9). Alas! He who was innocence itself in the sight of men, in the sight of God carried the sins of the whole world. He saw the calm implacable justice of God hovering above the cruel, perverted justice of the Jews.

Only, the one was prosecuting the man,

while the other was persecuting a God. The one led through expiation to mercy; the other, through murder, was hastening to eternal malediction.

The Son of the Blessed God

CAIAPHAS must have become aware of the impossibility of finding Jesus at fault, or of leading Him by insidious questions into making compromising statements. Even the pitiable condition to which He was now reduced had not robbed the Saviour of one whit of that moral superiority, of that divine acuteness, which had so often turned the point of their questions against the questioners. The hired witnesses had not proved equal to their difficult task. The prophecies concerning them had been fulfilled to the very letter:

"Let deceitful lips be made dumb, "which speak iniquity against the just" (Ps. xxx. 19). "The arrows of children "are their wounds; and their tongues are "weak against them" (Ps. lxiii. 8). "The "mouth is stopped of them that speak "wicked things" (Ps. lxii. 12).

Judging therefore that the spite of the

Sanhedrin would not show itself particular enough as to the choice and weight of the clauses under consideration, the Pontiff had recourse to what seemed to him a better way. Putting aside all question of fact or of doctrine, he sought by a direct question, admitting of no equivocation, to provoke from the accused such a reply as would catch Him in the very act of blasphemy.

" Tell us if thou art the Christ ? "

Jesus answered : " If I shall tell you " you will not believe me : and if I shall " also ask you you will not answer me, nor " let me go " (Luke xxii. 66, 68).

Thus at the very outset of the trial the vital question was asked. The divinity of Jesus Christ was not only the culminating point of the action, but also the most considerable fact of the whole Jewish religion. If at that moment Judea was stirred, if the crowds became frenzied, if hatred had gathered in the heart of the priests, if a strong interest, unique in the history of human discussions, shook the heart of all the priests of Israel, it was because the question put by the synagogue to the God-Man : Art thou the

Christ? was *the* supreme question, a question of life and death.

The Sanhedrin, trembling with excitement, could no longer contain themselves. They did not consider that, from a judicial point of view, the answer given by Jesus was sufficiently formal. Would he even yet escape them? Or could they not still, by strictly authentic means, wrest from Him the damaging admission, of higher importance than all other declarations and conclusive on every point? They could no longer repress their impatience or control their emotion.

"All at the same moment" (Luke xxii. 70), with tumultuous haste, they took their determination, calling for a more positive declaration from Jesus: "Thou art then "the Son of God?"

Then, in a scene of indescribable solemnity and emotion, amidst these breathless assassins, Caiaphas, grave, sacerdotal, in a pompous tone, repeated the demand in these words: "I adjure thee by the living "God to tell us if thou art the Christ, the Son of the blessed God" (Matt. xxvi. 63; Mark xiv. 61).

The hypocrite blessed God, even while

conspiring against the life of the God-Man: as it had been written.

A dramatic silence must have made itself heard.

The Sanhedrin, representing the Jewish religion, listened intently. Hell, which, after theology, remained for long without knowing positively the divinity of the Messiah, was listening. The past, pulsating with the living souls of the prophets; the future, irradiated with the learning of its teachers and reddened with the blood of its martyrs; the heavens ripe for the everlasting Hosannah—all were listening. Every knee was prepared to bow. The supreme proclamation was about to be made before the only tribunal divinely invested with religious authority.

And Jesus, with even greater solemnity and gravity than the Pontiff, replied:

"Thou hast said! Nevertheless I "say unto you, hereafter you shall see "the Son of Man sitting on the right "hand of the power of God, and coming "in the midst of a tempest" (Matt. xxvi. 64; Mark xiv. 62).

Of that day the prophet has said: "God shall come manifestly: our God

" shall come and shall not keep silence. " A fire shall burn before Him ; and a " mighty tempest shall be round about " Him " (Ps. xlix. 3).

A shiver ran through the assembly. Caiaphas, tormented by ill - concealed anxiety, lost all control of himself, and tearing his garments, exclaimed :

" He hath blasphemed ! What further " need have we of witnesses ? " (Matt. xxvi. 65).

In a moment all was tumult. " What " need we any further testimony ? " they shouted. " We ourselves have heard it " from his own mouth " (Luke xxii. 71).

Then said Caiaphas : " What think " you. To what do you condemn Him ? "

And all yelped out the same reply :

" To death " (Matt. xxvi. 66).

Eleven millions of Christians were to die during the first eighteen centuries of the Church, for having testified to the divinity of Jesus. It was fitting that Jesus Himself, the king of martyrs, should be the first to sign with His blood the testimony of His divinity. Providence could not ordain in its decrees anything which should be more admirable

than this event. Jesus condemned to death for having affirmed that the Christ is the Son of the living God !

The sentence was passed. However, one difficulty, terrible to Jewish hatred, arose : since the Roman occupation they had lost, with many other rights, the right to condemn to death, which the Sanhedrin possessed according to the law of Moses. Judah had lost its sword with its sceptre (Gen. xlix. 10). That is why the sentence which the iniquitous judges had just passed was an empty form until ratified and rendered active by the Roman government.

Therefore with bound hands and worn out by the fatigues and emotions of the night, Jesus, by order of the priests, was dragged before Pilate.

They followed Him like famished wolves. And the house of Caiaphas, erstwhile so full of commotion, was left deserted and abandoned to its usual condition of sacerdotal calm

The End of Judas

JUDAS was prowling.

A repentance (Matt. xxvii. 3) without contrition gradually took possession of his soul. Probably not one among the priests and their circle had spared him manifestations of disgust or words of contempt. He had seen for himself, in the strange majesty of the scene in the Judgment Hall, that the Master whom he had betrayed was of those great ones whose sublimity triumphs over treachery, calumny, even death. He had had opportunity to measure the value of Him whom he had sold into the hands of the priests, as against the price given for Him. He was stung by remorse, and humiliated, for he had been disgracefully taken in. And then, he had witnessed the undoing of Peter: he could guess the cursing of the disciples, could feel the spitting of all mankind on his face. Lastly, low as he had fallen, though he was the only Jew, properly speak-

ing,[1] of the apostolic college, the voice of Christ replying to His judges, the sweetness of His countenance, must have touched him. And now the worst was accomplished; the Master was condemned to death. Among all those who would speak of the death of this just person voices would not be lacking to curse the infamy that had sold Him.

Judas felt that so great a burden of shame and bitterness for himself, so much acrid joy for the priests, so heavy a load of sorrow for Jesus, had not been adequately repaid; and, resolved to rid himself of the money which weighed him down, he also had followed in the steps of the cortège.

The Antonia Tower where the governor lived adjoined the Temple. It is certain that some among the chief priests who accompanied Jesus on arriving at the Tower fell out from the procession and went into the Temple, so as to take their share in the lucrative business of that day. Thus Judas, going straight to the treasury,

[1] Keiroth, the native place of the traitor, belonged to the kingdom of Juda. No other of the apostles was of this kingdom.

would find there a certain number of priests.

He said to them, with the abruptness of a man goaded to despair: "I have sinned: "it is innocent blood which I have be- "trayed" (Matt. xxvii. 4).

They, worried and disdainful, had scarcely had time to reply: "What is "that to us? see thou to that!" (Matt. xxvii. 4), ere the traitor had cast down the thirty pieces of silver on the Temple pavement, and fled in the direction of Cedron.

The words of the prophet dinned in his ears: "May his days be few: and his "bishopric let another take. . . . May "the devil stand at his right hand. When "he is judged may he go out condemned. ". . . May his children be fatherless and "his wife a widow" (Ps. cviii. 6-9).

Once more he saw the road along which under his direction the Master had been dragged. He passed by the Garden, silent witness of his kiss of treachery; perchance he even dared to enter it, and see the ground stained by "great drops of "blood," as yet uneffaced by time. The blood cried from the ground, like that of

Abel (Gen. iv. 10), and the cry bit his conscience with the tooth of remorse. He believed that nothing in heaven or earth could condone his crime (Gen. iv. 13), for he knew nothing of mercy, and had no faith in benevolence (1 John iv. 16). He took a rope and hanged himself, as the prophet had foretold (Ps. xxxiv. 8). He whose glorious destiny had been "to sit "on a throne judging the twelve tribes of "Israel" (Luke xxii. 30), hung himself, in sight of that valley where, in the last day, all the sins of the universe will be summoned to judgment (Joel iii. 12), that even they, unclean as they be, may hurl their anathema, their curse, at the traitor. He hung himself, delivering the earth, which would perchance have vomited it forth, from the weight of his body. He hung himself, and his corpse, hideous in death as his soul had been repugnant during his mortal life, burst open in the midst (Acts i. 18): and the earth must have shuddered with disgust at receiving, as one receives filth in one's face, the decomposed entrails of Judas.

The chief priests did not long leave the thirty pieces of silver lying about on the

ground. After a moment of hesitation, which had been foretold by the prophet: "They have thought to cast away my "price" (Ps. lxi. 5), they gathered up the money. Then they were seized with scruples: it was not lawful to defile the treasury of the Temple with "the price "of blood" (Matt. xxvii. 6). It had been quite lawful to draw upon this same treasury for paying traitors, corrupting witnesses, gratifying murderers, and purchasing innocent blood: but to restore conscience-money would have been sacrilege in the bigoted opinion of these kindred of Judas. Perhaps by their refusal these heroes of the phylactery intended to convey a subtle insult to incarnate Purity, for the law on which they based their decision ran thus: "Thou shalt not offer the hire of a "strumpet, nor the price of a dog in the "house of the Lord" (Deut. xxiii. 18).

They who had bribed Judas feigned fastidiousness without suspecting that one day mankind would applaud the decision of the eternal Judge who would place them below harlots (Matt. xxi. 31), and would shut them out from His king-

dom, as though they were dogs (Matt. vii. 6).

It is pleasant, meantime, to think that the piece of ground bought at the price of the humiliation and the blood of Jesus, was consecrated to the last sleep of those who, not being Jews, by this means obtained an assured resting-place, free from all fear of defilement or desecration.

One by one the prophecies were being fulfilled by the very people whom they condemned. It was written : " They will " take the thirty pieces of silver, the value " of Him whom the children of Israel " have quoted at this price, and they will " buy with it the potter's field, as the Lord " appointed " (Matt. xxvii. 9, 10).

Pontius Pilate

ON leaving the house of Caiaphas, the Sanhedrin and their hirelings had hurried Jesus the whole length of Jerusalem to the Pretorium of Pilate (Luke xxiii. 1). They were frightened, and they were also in a desperate hurry: their cowardice and their cruelty gave wings to their desire for the end. Besides that, they knew that a triple execution had been fixed for that day: those of Barabbas and two thieves, all three outlaws who had been arrested in a recent rebellion. The Roman governor leant towards severity The preparations for an execution had been made; thanks to which circumstance it would be easy to bring about the passing and carrying out of a sentence of death, for which it would not be necessary to issue orders, in any special manner, to the staff of executioners and soldiers. Three crosses were already prepared, it would not take long to make a fourth,

and everything would be at an end that very day.

A threefold sentiment at this moment divided the mind of Pilate, from whom was demanded the ratification of the greatest injustice the world has ever known: ambition, and as a consequence fear of disfavour with Tiberius, contempt for the Jews, and a tolerably genuine sense of justice. The first had led him by rapid steps to the position he now filled; the second had driven him more than once to cudgel the Jews and confiscate their goods; the third would turn him into a defender of Jesus, a miserable "counsel for the "defence," whose prevarication would be all the more abominable in that he would wilfully betray his duty with free will and full knowledge.

The Sanhedrin, then, forgot for the moment the many blows they had received, and the money of which they professed themselves robbed, and they arrived at the governor's palace loudly demanding his co-operation. When they came in sight of the palace their scruples overcame them: that is why they refused to enter the Pretorium for fear of defiling them-

selves, which would have deprived them of a pious consolation—that of eating unleavened bread.

Remaining outside the Pretorium they sent a messenger to fetch the governor, in order that they might state their grievances and obtain their request.

It must now have been about seven o'clock. Pilate, accustomed to the stern discipline of a Roman soldier, was already up. Was he expecting the case which was about to be brought before him? It does not matter much to us. The interesting and renowned Rabbi who was to appear before him was too well known in Judea for Pilate to be in absolute ignorance of His existence, and the trend of His mind. He also knew well how impassioned the Jewish mob became over any subject. Everything relating to the Christ was, necessarily, of grave importance, even in the eyes of Roman pride. For this reason the governor did not delay his appearance, and crossing the Pretorium, to gain a glimpse of the prisoner—so majestic and yet so pitiable—he reached the threshold of the door and found himself confronted with the

mob excited by the Sanhedrites (John xviii. 29).

Certainly no practiced eye could have found difficulty in discerning, at the first glance, the respective dignity and worth of the accusers and the accused. From the first moment Pilate recognised that all the lowest and most cruel instincts of the Synagogue were aroused against a man whose sole crime consisted in denying the superstitions of the Pharisees, and unmasking their hypocrisies. He assumed an air at once ironical and contemptuous, and asked them this question: "Of what can you possibly accuse this "man?" (John xviii. 29).

The Sanhedrites had not come to parley. In their opinion the case had already been tried: all they wanted was the Roman sanction to carry out their sentence. And now here was Pilate asking for explanations! Would he oblige them to run the risk of loosing Jesus by a new trial? Must they take the chance of a fresh sentence passed by a judge who from the first had adopted an attitude about which it was impossible for them to deceive themselves?

With evident ill-humour they replied: "If He were not a malefactor we would "not have delivered Him up to thee" (John xviii. 30).

Pilate must have smiled bitterly at hearing these banditti so prompt to dub the Galilean a malefactor, and he mocked them, saying: "Then take Him you, and "judge Him according to your laws!" (John xviii. 31).

Doubtless the governor had his suspicions that Jesus was already tried and condemned; and he wished to give the Jews plainly to understand that he was not in the mood to be mixed up in the matter.

The embittered Sanhedrites, not accepting this verdict of *non-proven*, with brutal clearness expounded their wish to the representative of Cæsar in tones of recrimination, inspired by the memory of their forfeited rights: "It is no longer lawful "for us," they said, "to put anyone to "death" (John xviii. 31), the tones of their voices adding: You, who personate Roman tyranny, know that well enough!

Pilate reminded himself that a good Roman governor was he who raised the

least number of difficulties in the way of the Empire, and who did everything in his power to make the yoke of defeat as little galling as possible. These men, worthless as they were, by raising the question of their lost rights and exhibiting on this point a discontent that might increase, recalled Pilate to the sense of the chief concern of his administration. The favour of Tiberius was extremely fickle, and Pilate cared for that favour above all other things.

But independent of him and of Jewish passions the Divine plan was being worked out, and prophecy was being fulfilled (John xviii. 32). Jesus Himself had said, concerning His death:

"The Son of man shall be betrayed to "the chief priests . . . and they shall con- "demn Him to death, and shall deliver "Him to the Gentiles to be mocked, and "scourged, and crucified, and the third day "He shall rise again" (Matt. xx. 19, 20).

For this reason Pilate was compelled, in spite of his power and his contempt, to bow to the violence of the Sanhedrin. Half yielding he, while not recognising the sentence they had passed, consented

to question them as to the crimes with which they charged their prisoner. This brought down a torrent of accusations, by which they sought to prove to the Pretor that he was ten-fold worthy of death. A judgment in order was the thing of all others that must be avoided: their own efforts to condemn Jesus according to law had shown them only too plainly that accusations and evidence against the Christ were unavailing. So they strove by the multitude and the nature of their complaints to impose upon Pilate. Putting aside the pretended religious crime which had served as the pretext for their sentence, they laid stress on the political delinquencies of the accused. They knew Pilate, and laid their finger directly on his weak spot.

"We have found this man," said they, "perverting our nation—forbidding to give "tribute to Cæsar—and saying that He "is Christ the King" (Luke xxiii. 2).

Pilate began to feel very uncomfortable. These assertions appeared to him such obviously ridiculous calumnies. There was not an intelligent man in Jerusalem but would smile at them. But Tiberius

was at Capri, and a pretor never knew who might not be a spy in the Emperor's pay. It would be quite sufficient for some idle gossip to say: "The governor of "Judea was warned that a man was stir- "ring up sedition in the country, resisting "the taxes and deriding authority, and "yet this man is still alive"; and Pilate would be hopelessly compromised, perhaps lost.

Therefore he returned to the Pretorium and called for Jesus (John xviii. 33). Perhaps the explanations of the prisoner would give him a loophole of escape from his embarrassment, so that he might evade the Jews' demands.

Jesus stood before the governor (Matt. xxvii. 11).

His sad wan face, His bound hands, His threadbare, dusty clothes His grave demeanour, must have contrasted strangely with the flushed faces and infuriated gestures, the holiday garb and uncontrolled excitement of the crowd who raged outside. Pilate was struck with compassion. There was an underlying contempt in his heart for the prisoner because He was of the Jewish nation, but, nevertheless, ad-

miration took possession of him, because he recognised beneath that sublime aspect the beauty of misfortune and the majesty of patience, as never before.

Just as the conversation between Pilate and the priests had been marked by pride on the one side, and venomous spite on the other, so the interview with Jesus was peaceful, with an evident show of sympathy on the part of the Pretor.

Pilate's first question was distinguished by his customary irony towards the Jews. Turning to this fettered vagabond, this Rabbi reduced to the position of a common malefactor, he asked Him: "Art "thou the King of the Jews?" (Matt. xxvii. 11).

Disregarding the irony of the question, Jesus answered: "Sayest thou this thing "of thyself, or have others told thee it of "me?" (John xviii. 34).

It was as though He said: "Take heed, "O Pilate; that is a serious, a sacred "question. If you seek to deride the "accusation of the Jews I warn you that, "ridiculous though it may appear, its inner "meaning holds a divine truth that may "by no means be made light of."

Pilate refused to enter upon the discussion suggested by the remark of Jesus. His overwhelming contempt for Israel forced the question to his lips: "Am I "also a Jew?" Let us leave these idle questionings, only fit for cavilling fault-finders. "Thy own nation and the chief "priests have delivered thee up to me: "what hast thou done?" (John xviii. 35).

Jesus persistently turned the conversation back to the channels from which Pilate strove to divert it. It is a strange and wonderful thing, the domination of this outcast of the nation over Cæsar's scornful representative. But a short while before He had instead of replying to His judge assumed the *rôle* of questioner. And now He refused to allow the governor to lead the conversation, but compelled him to listen to what He had to say. He re-opened the subject of His royalty: "My kingdom is not of this "world. If my kingdom were of this "world my servants would certainly "strive that I should not be delivered "to the Jews: but now my kingdom is "not from hence" (John xviii. 36). You, Pilate, have nothing to fear for Cæsar

from me. I do not dispute any of his rights. As for the Jews, they are my most bigoted enemies; the hour is at hand which will set a yawning gulf betwixt them and me. But even you, Roman though you be, may enter into my kingdom, for it is not of this world.

Jesus declined to submit to Pilate's examination. Pilate, helpless to resist, followed out Jesus' train of thought. He repeated, and this time at the Master's will, his former question. There was no longer any trace of mocking allusion to the accursed race; he occupied himself, as with a matter of deep importance, with that royalty which had before struck him as so ludicrous.

"Art thou a king, then?" he said.

Jesus answered:

"Thou hast said!"

But an hour before the divinely authorised and appointed priesthood had provoked from the Messiah a declaration of His divinity: and now political and worldly authority drew from Him an admission of His royalty. It seemed as if the spirit of prophecy fell upon all who came in contact with the Christ! (Joel ii. 28).

And then Jesus added:

"For this was I born, and for this I "came into the world that I should give "testimony to the truth. Everyone "that is of the truth heareth my voice" (John xviii. 37).

What a subtle snare eternal wisdom laid for Pilate in these admirable words! What superhuman skill guided this momentous interview! There were brought face to face, practically alone, the God who yearned to save and the man who resisted the favour. The mind of Jesus skilfully guided, forcibly led, the mind of Pilate to discuss Truth. The speech of the Son of man held the governor spell-bound. It was as though He who appeared to be the captive had flung a mysterious net over the soul of him who was no longer a judge, and whose final subjugation seemed probable. One more touch, and Pilate would become a believer, perhaps a martyr. Suddenly he bethought him of Tiberius Cæsar, and with a mental effort he released himself.

"What is Truth?" he demanded. And as if he dreaded the answer he turned his back on the prisoner and rejoined the

priests who were growing impatient outside (John xviii. 38), while the multitude surged round them (Mark xxiii. 4).

Truth, Pilate, is sister to Justice. Arraigned before her, man has to choose which he will be: a martyr or a quibbler.

The Silence of Jesus

PILATE, more than ever convinced not only of the innocence of Jesus, but also of His moral greatness, had the courage to say to the priests:

"For my part I find in Him nothing "that would furnish matter for an action" (Luke xxiii. 4).

One can imagine the storm such a declaration would arouse among the chief priests! All their skilful plotting to come to nothing! A tumult arose of accusations, cries of rage, calumnies of every description (Matt. xxvii. 12). Their obstinacy constantly increased (Mark xxiii. 5). The whole life of Christ, His words and actions, were sifted by treachery and hatred. There was nothing throughout His innocent and charitable life that was not smirched with mire and stained with gall by the venomous enemies. In spite of his fixed determination not to compromise himself, Pilate increasingly inclined to-

wards Christ. He listened for a time in a stupefied manner to the outpourings of the Jews, then at last, when he could stand no more, he turned abruptly to Jesus, who had been dragged outside and now stood close beside him, and said :

" Dost thou not hear the grave accusa-
" tions they allege against thee? (Matt.
" xxvii. 13). Answerest thou nothing?
" Behold in how many things they accuse
" thee " (Mark. xv. 14).

" And Jesus answered him to never a word, so that the governor marvelled exceedingly " (Matt. xxvii. 14).

Pilate had no knowledge of God, and did not know that at that hour all the sins of the whole world weighed on the conscience of Jesus, and that Jesus, crushed and confounded, held His peace, seeing behind Pilate eternal justice. Pilate was not a Jew, and could not therefore grasp the fact that the splendid and terrible rite ordained by Moses was being carried out, not figuratively, but in fullest reality.

" The priest shall put both hands upon
" the head of the scape-goat, and shall
" confess all the iniquities of the children
" of Israel, and all their offences and sins :

" and praying that these may alight on " his head, he shall turn him out by a man " ready for it, into the desert. And when " the goat hath carried all their iniquities " into the desert . . . he who let him go " *shall wash himself*" (Lev. xvi. 21, 22, 26).

Pilate was not a Christian, and could not understand the sublimity and heroism of silence in the face of calumny and scorn. And therefore he " marvelled " greatly."

" I am the man who sees my misery," reflected the divine prisoner, under the blows of the Lord's indignation. " He " has plunged me into darkness; it is " against me only that all this day long He " has turned His hand. His anger is round " about me like a wall; He has compassed " me about with bitterness and with grief. " . . . Why should I speak? Even when " I cry and entreat my supplications are " repulsed beforehand" (Thren. iii. 1-8). And meditating, in His wounded heart, upon this mournful cry of the prophet, He remembered the weeping Peter, who would one day write these words, to the winning of souls:

" This is thankworthy, if for conscience

"towards God a man endure sorrows,
"suffering wrongfully. . . . For unto this
"are you called: because Christ also
"suffered for us, leaving you an example
"that you should follow His steps. Who
"did no sin, neither was guile found in
"His mouth. *Who, when He was reviled,*
"*reviled not again; when He suffered, He*
"*threatened not: but delivered Himself to*
"*him that judged him unjustly*" (1 Peter ii. 19-23).

And this silence will, for all time, witness to the supreme greatness of Jesus.

Nothing could be bolder or more superb than the vigorous protest made by Job to God:

"I am worn out with the burden of
"this life; I will give full vent, though I
"must suffer for it, to the speech which
"oppresses me, I will speak to ease the
"bitterness of my soul! I will say to
"God Himself: Do not condemn me, tell
"me why thou judgest me so? Doth it
"seem good to thee to crush me thus, to
"oppress me, me who am the work of thy
"hands, and to join the conspiracy of the
"impious? Hast thou then, even thou,
"eyes of flesh and blood to see things as

"men see them? to seek for iniquity in "me, to discover sin in me, even while "thou knowest my innocence? . . . Thy "hands have formed me, and is it thus "that thou lettest me fall back into the "abyss? . . . Woe is me if I have ever "been ungodly! But if I am righteous "wherefore shall I not lift up my head? "Why am I steeped in so much affliction "and misery? Behold how thou streng-"thenest those that witness against me, "behold how thou multipliest anger round "about me, behold how persecution is mad "against me" (Job x. 1-17). "Hear "me! Be silent! Put your finger upon "your mouth!" (Job xxi. 5). "Who is "he that would enter into an argument "with me? Let such an one come! Why "should I keep unbroken a silence which "consumes me?" (Job xiii. 19).

This outburst of savage audacity shines out from the pages of the Old Testament with incomparable splendour. It resembles the heroic utterances of martyrs to the New Law, their superhuman defiance flung in the face of their murderers, their songs of victory in the midst of torture.

All of which was epic, splendid: but in

the history of heroism one line only is divine:

"Jesus held His peace" (Matt. xxvi. 63).

This passive, resigned attitude urged on the already exasperated priests. The voice of the prophet had cried:

"Is it for long, O murderers, that you "rush thus upon a weakened man, as one "throws oneself on a tottering wall, on a "fence that is already half destroyed?" (Ps. lxi. 4). With increasing violence they accused the Master: tongues were sharpened (Ps. lvi. 5; lxiii. 4), calumnies were heaped upon Him (Ps. cviii. 5), and everyone laid hold of some fragment of His past life (Ps. xlix. 14). "He has not "ceased," they cried, "to stir up the people "throughout all Judea, since He began in "Galilee!" (Luke xxiii. 5).

At the mention of Galilee Pilate demanded if the prisoner were a Galilean. And when an answer was made in the affirmative he pointed out that He belonged then to Herod's jurisdiction, and, delighted to rid himself of so annoying an affair, he sent Him back to the latter, who was then at Jerusalem.

Herod

HEROD, cowardly and lascivious, after having trembled before John the Baptist, who had denounced his excesses (Mark vi. 17-20), finished by giving the head of the prophet to a dancing girl whose performance had pleased him (Mark vi. 28). He came of a family who massacred their own children that their full enjoyment of authority might be undisturbed. And since, being a Jew, the flesh of swine was forbidden him, a proverb was current concerning him: "Better be Herod's pig than "his son." This lewd race, brought up in an atmosphere of infamy and cruelty, drank shame as if it were blood. Herod was even more worthless than Pilate, who was at the least interested in Jesus. Herod looked upon the Son of God merely as a juggler, a mountebank, of whom he could demand some trick. He was therefore very glad to see Jesus, for

he had been desirous of doing so for a long time (Luke xxiii. 8).

Jesus, pitiful and mean, His hands bound, appeared before the ostentatious pride of the tetrarch. Was not the mere glance of the latter an honour for this worthless Rabbi, whose family was unknown (Is. liii. 8), who came out of Galilee, a country notoriously barren of prophets (John vii. 52), of the city of Nazareth from which no good thing could come (John i. 46). What pity could the blameless simplicity of this righteous man (Job xii. 14) have infused into the cynical epicurism of the adulterous prince, gross and happy? The obscure Galilean, "whose "strength was dried up like clay that has "passed through the furnace; vile dust, "whose faltering tongue was paralysed in "His throat" (Ps. xxi. 16), might consider Himself highly favoured in appearing before the wealthy tetrarch who deigned to interest himself in Him. With a good-nature savouring of contempt Herod began to question Jesus (Luke xxiii. 9).

But Jesus answered him nothing.

Obviously the culprit was a poor imbecile who was unaware of the magnificent

opportunity offered Him of securing the protection and interest of this Jewish king. So Herod made allowances for Him, and while the God-Man was silently repeating the words of the Psalmist: "I am silent. "O iniquity, thou hast mistaken me for "one of thy equals; thou knowest not that "one day I shall judge thee and pronounce "thy sentence" (Ps. lxix. 21), the tetrarch by endless questions sought to extract a response from the Rabbi. The occasion offered much food for Herod's curiosity regarding this strange being, concerning whom such marvellous tales were in circulation. The bearing of the Rabbi bordered on the imposing in its obstinate dumbness.

The chief priests and scribes, with untiring hatred, repeated over and over again their accusations. Grinding their teeth they dragged into the light every incident in the past life of this blameless man (Ps. xxxvi. 12). Herod, indignant at the persistent silence of Jesus, which was so damaging to Him, and knowing no other means by which to assert the importance of his position, evidently misapprehended by the vagabond who did not even deign

to defend Himself even before so distinguished a tribunal, shrugged his shoulders, saying: "He is a lunatic"; and as the Master still held His peace, he began to mock Him and set Him at nought. The people surrounding the tetrarch added their gibes to the haughty insolence of the Kinglet. Then as Jesus, unmoved by these insults, still did not speak, Herod gave orders to clothe Him in a white robe, token of madness, and sent Him back to Pilate (Luke xxiii. 11).

The white robe symbolises purity of heart. "At all times let thy garment be "white," the Wise Man had said (Eccles. ix. 8); and it was peculiarly appropriate to the Son of Mary on that day, since it was the day of His great baptism of blood (Luke xii. 50).

From that day, says the Evangelist, Herod and Pilate, who were not on good terms, were reconciled. "The princes "became of one mind" in the abominable work (Ps. ii. 2). Were not the Scribes in unison with the Pharisees notwithstanding their hatred of them? Would not Pilate, in spite of his crushing contempt for the Jews, shortly become their

accomplice? And had not the chief priests already identified themselves with Judas the thief? Thus the Passion became the rallying point for the varied forms of human aversion; while ever more and more clearly was demonstrated the fact that a superior power was overruling an event that formed the occasion of the most unlooked-for alliances.

The Embarrassment of Pilate

DIMINISHED in his estimation Jesus reappeared before Pilate; Herod had abandoned Him with mockery. Not only had a great opportunity been lost, but the wrath and daring of the Sanhedrin were steadily increasing. What last resource remained for the rescue of the Victim who, so far from defending Himself, had not even attempted to aid those who were now powerless to save Him? In these desperate circumstances Pilate made one more effort to appeal to the reason of the infuriated crowd who surged round the place of judgment. Consider, he said, what you are doing, and what it is that you demand of me. "You have "presented unto me this man as one "that perverteth the people, and behold, "I, having examined Him before you, "find no cause in this man in those "things wherein you accuse Him. No, "nor Herod neither. For I sent you

"to him, and behold, nothing worthy of "death is imputed to Him" (Luke xxiii. 14, 15).

By and by St Peter would assert before the Jewish multitude, and without contradiction, that it had been the sincere wish of Pilate to acquit Jesus (Acts xiii. 28).

But the Scribes, the Pharisees, the chief priests, the people themselves, would have none of it, and offered, by unmistakable signs, strenuous opposition to the intention of the governor. Nothing would satisfy them short of "the soul of the "just and of the condemnation of inno- "cent blood" (Ps. xciii. 21), and they appeared inclined to "lengthen their "iniquity" (Ps. cxxviii. 3) just so long as the judge prolonged his resistance.

Just as the governor's last effort seemed to be failing, there arose a tumult outside the palace, and a babel of voices clamouring for the customary release of a prisoner (Mark xv. 18).

It was in fact a custom at the Feast of the Passover to grant pardon to one guilty man chosen by the Jews (Matt. xxvii. 15 16).

Pilate grasped at this unlooked-for good fortune, this opportunity of saving Jesus, and said to the mob: "Certainly it is my "custom, at the Feast of the Passover, to "set at liberty a captive. Do you wish, "therefore, that I give up to you the King "of the Jews? (Matt. xxvii. 17).

Pilate believed that at last he had found the means so long sought for: he knew very well that it was only for envy that the priests sought to kill Jesus, and He counted on the people to baffle them (Matt. xxvii. 19).

But the people is blind, and envy was keeping watch.

Claudia Procula

WHILST the mob were still discussing the governor's offer, his wife sent a message to him privately, saying: "Have thou "nothing to do with that just man; I "have had, this very day, frightful dreams "about Him" (Matt. xxvii. 19).

Pilate, whom the resistance of the Jews rendered increasingly favourable to Jesus, was much impressed by the message.

Nicodemus has since related that the Jews endeavoured to make this incident tell against the accused: "Now you can "see that He uses witchcraft," they said; "it is He that has caused your wife to "dream this dream!" But Pilate was not to be deterred from striving to pluck the Saviour out of the hands of His enemies.

To the cry of the Psalmist: "Who "shall rise up for me against the evil-"doers? or who shall stand with me

"against the workers of iniquity?" (Ps. xciii. 16), a woman had responded.

Claudia Procula, whom later the Church numbered among the saints, was already secretly a Christian, as were the wife of Chusa, Herod's steward, and many other noble women of Jerusalem. Though her history is but vaguely known, it seems certain that she was born on French soil at Narbonne. The country that would one day be called France was the native land of Claudia Procula.

Thus Claudia became the foundress of that valiant race of Christians which would throw a poetic halo of virtue and glory round the birth-place of chivalrous faith. It would seem as though Jesus held in remembrance the one voice which had been raised on His behalf before the judgment seat of Pilate. While awaiting the advent of Joan of Arc amongst us, He gave to our country the penitence and the beauty of the Magdalen, as a reward for the courage and solicitude of Claudia.

Barabbas

MEANTIME the Jews were still discussing Pilate's proposal, while the chief priests, trembling at the bare idea that the people —so beloved by Jesus—might accept the unexpected offer, strove to bring them round to their own way of thinking.

It happened that at this time there was in the governor's prison a notorious prisoner called Barabbas, a robber (John xviii. 40), who had been arrested for sedition in the city, and cast into prison for murder (Luke xxiii. 19). The Sanhedrites exerted all their powers of eloquence to persuade the people that he was the man for whom they should demand pardon. What means did they use? Did they speak of Liberty and represent Barabbas as the hero of Jewish independence? Did they offer more of that infamous money with which they had already hired the false witnesses, and bribed Judas? Either suggestion seems probable, having regard to the enthusiastic

and venal nature of the mob with whom they dealt. Very possibly they used both means, and soon the first sound of voices clamouring for the release of Barabbas reached the ears of Pilate.

He could not conceal his astonishment. It had not occurred to him as possible that this crowd could forget all that Jesus had done for them, and consent to His death in the stead of a common malefactor. To emphasise the contrast between the two prisoners he linked their names together, asking: "Whom will "you that I release to you, Barabbas, "or Jesus that is called Christ?" (Matt. xxvii. 17).

The crowd re-echoed the shrill cries of the Scribes: "Away with this man, "and release unto us Barabbas" (Luke xxiii. 18).

The people were about to cast their votes. Death and life were presented, crime and innocence, freebooting and goodness, rebellion and love, the hand of a murderer and the Hand scattering benefits, he who assassinated and He who gave His life, hell and God; and the blundering, careless populace, faithful to

that law by which it has always been and will perhaps always be its own worst enemy, without hesitation, without remorse, cried, "Barabbas!"

Jesus had said, and truly, "My king-"dom is not of this world"; because the world is possessed of plunderers, rebels, and thieves.

Moreover, since the choice was one more insult flung in the face of Christ (Is. lxxxviii. 92), it was fitting that the incident should be accomplished in this manner.

Was it not written: "He shall be "sacrificed by the whole multitude of the "children of Israel" (Ex. xii. 6).

Every day this iniquitous choice of the crowd is renewed in the heart of sinners. Their reason, faith, and judgment see what is right, that is, the will of God, but their rebellious passions cry: "Barabbas!"

The Sanhedrin had triumphed! The people, excited by them, threw themselves this time against Jesus, who thus, deprived of His strongest support, became momentarily more difficult to defend or to save. Choked with rage, the voices of the fanatics rose more imperious, more bitter

(Luke xxiii. 28). Pilate still strove to withstand them, but at an increasing disadvantage. Still counting on a generous impulse on the part of the people he persisted: "What will you then that I "do to the King of the Jews that is called Christ" (Mark xv. 12; Matt. xxvii. 22). With redoubled energy the exasperated Sanhedrin cried out: "Let Him be "crucified" (Matt. xxvii. 23). Still Pilate persisted: "Why, what evil hath He "done?" But they cried out yet the more in the epilepsy of their hatred: "Let Him be crucified!" (Mark xv. 14).

Pilate was in despair; never could he hope to tame these foaming hounds of hell. Thinking that some preliminary torture, the sight of a few bloody cruelties, would perhaps calm this fever of ferocity that opposition served only to aggravate, he gave orders to seize Jesus and scourge Him.

The Scourging

THAT was a terrible scene.

Jesus, stripped of His garments, His hands bound behind His back, was fastened to a post about thirty inches high. Old and time-honoured legends relate that the Roman soldiers, divining that it was Pilate's aim to excite the pity of the Jews, employed the most terrible of the instruments used for scourging. Rods of iron succeeded thorny branches, and were in their turn followed by hooked chains. History has made us acquainted with executioners armed with heavy thongs which they wielded upon the condemned person, leaving livid bruises and bleeding furrows. If we accept the word of St Bridget, the Virgin Mary must have related to her, in a vision, the atrocious scene, part of which she had witnessed: "He was fastened without the "least clothing, naked as on the day of "His birth, and filled with shame at such

" a condition. His friends had all vanished. " His enemies had risen up, and standing " around Him scourged His body, pure " from all stain, virgin of all sin. At " the first blow I swooned away. Then, " having regained my senses, I saw His " body, bruised and flayed even to the " ribs, with the bones laid bare. And " what was even more atrocious still, the " whips as they rose in the air tore away " shreds of flesh. And I saw there my " Son all bleeding and torn, under a " continuous shower of blows" (Revelations of St Bridget, xvi. 1. and iv. 70).

It was the same flesh that the Blessed Mother had so tenderly wrapped in swaddling clothes, so lovingly nourished at her breast, and warmed with her caresses. The thongs whistling through the air, fell with a dull thud; the executioners, as woodmen who fell an oak, marking with their laboured breathing the measure of the blows. It was a vortex of anguish, of movement, of dust, of bleeding fragments, and in the midst the beloved Being whom His mother had cradled in her arms at Bethlehem, and had watched growing up at Nazareth, whom many had followed

painfully and wearily along the roads of Judea; it was His very self, deafened, blinded, torn by those pitiless strokes which soon would leave of His beauty but a formless and hideously bloody mass.

Prophecies were being fulfilled with a terrible and literal fidelity. It was indeed a fact that sin "now fell like hail" (Ps. xxxi. 10) upon the pure and atoning flesh of the Saviour. According to the Hebrew text of another prediction: "Infamous "ploughmen scooped their furrows out of "His back" (Ps. cxxviii. 3). Thus was one of the most grievous and at the same time most eloquent phases of the Passion accomplished.

The Saviour's mind was fixed on it: "I am ready for scourges, and the sorrow "of it is continually before Me" (Ps. xxxvii. 18). The earliest prophecies had foretold the horror of this scene: "He "shall wash His robe in wine, and His "garment in the blood of the grape" (Gen. xlix. 11): and unable to grasp the idea of such cruelty on the part of mortal men, the prophet had anxiously asked of the future what the fearful vision could mean: "Who "is this whose robe is dyed with the

"purple of Bosra? . . . Why is thy "apparel red, and thy garment like theirs "that tread in the wine-press?" (Is. lxiii. 1, 2). That is to say: How is the humanity of the Word thus stained with blood?

Heaven had bestowed upon earth the God of the stall at Bethlehem and of Tabor; and earth gave back to heaven the man of scourgings and of Calvary, saying in the words of Pilate: "Behold "the Man!"

But the time was come for ending the terrible butchery. The soldiers were exhausted, the sufferer dying. Pilate's orders had been to scourge, not to kill, and Jesus must have died under the blows He had already received had He not been upheld by a hidden strength. The full measure of stripes had been exceeded. The severe law of Moses seemed to have foreseen the flagellation of Christ and to have been seized with compassion for flesh that laboured under blows: "They shall proportion," it had been written in Deuteronomy, "the "number of stripes to the measure of "the crime: but in such manner, how-"ever, as not to exceed the number of

"forty, for fear, O Israel, lest thy brother "appear too hideously torn to thy eyes!" (Deut. xxv. 2, 3). Roman bloodthirstiness had outrun Jewish fury, and the limits were already over-reached.

Pilate was not here. He had withdrawn while they tortured the gentle Victim. Perhaps he had joined Claudia to enquire of her concerning the remark that she had made to him. The soldiers, to while away the time until his return, began to torment Jesus. They were the conquerors of the world, and they held captive a bound Jew: what better sport could they wish?

Fresh Outrages

THEY led Him out into the middle of the courtyard, and called all their comrades of the guard to come and share in the fun (Mark xv. 14). By degrees Jesus awoke from the stupor into which He had fallen under the scourging. His garments had been given back to Him, and possibly some of the precautions enjoined by rule to avert the death of the sufferer had been bestowed upon Him. Then the tormenting began afresh, and increased in proportion to the reassurance of His returning strength.

The executioners were greatly pleased at the transformation wrought by their whips in the self-styled "King of the Jews"; and the newcomers, tickled by the sight of the pretended leader of a hated nation humbled and miserable, wished to pursue to the uttermost the "blood-stained jokes," as Bossuet has called them. For a second time they

tore the prisoner's clothes from His lacerated body, and put on Him red rags, in mocking imitation of the scarlet robe of an emperor. Then taking several twigs of the thorny bushes that grew at the foot of the Antonia Tower they plaited them into a crown and put it on His head.

Finally, to complete the comedy, they plucked a reed for a sceptre and placed it between His bound hands (Matt. xxvii. 28, 29).

Was not the Roman people, with its ignorant brutality, at that moment beginning in truth the work to which Providence had destined it? The day would come in which the Cæsars would throw their cloaks of royal purple round the shoulders of Christ, placing the triple crown of gold on His brow, and in His hands the sceptre of the world. Since it was reserved for them to transmit to the "immortal King of ages" (1 Tim. i. 17) an everlasting dominion over the world, it was fitting that, at the very outset, they should by suggestive symbols indicate the true character of His royalty. The idle jesting of a cynical and brutal

soldiery was in truth the fulfilment of an essentially prophetic act.

This king whom thus they ironically invested with royalty must preserve throughout all generations the badges received at the hands of the sovereign people.

The scarlet robe is the only one befitting a king whose kingdom is extended and maintained by the spilled blood of martyrs. He whose destiny it was to call millions of disciples to fight even unto death must be clothed with the insignia of His own death, for the reassurance and consolation of those who would sacrifice their lives to Him.

The crown of thorns is the true crown of the God who teaches penitence and humility to a magnificent and fallen humanity. He who requires of His disciples mortification of the flesh, resignation under trials, must make manifest before the eyes of all that He did not dread the trials of mortification or the thorns of life.

And lastly, the reed sceptre is a symbol worthy of adoration between the hands of the Prince of Peace whose

marvellously sweet voice has proclaimed: "My yoke is easy, my burden is light!" (Matt. xi. 30). And He who must win souls by love and rule them by gentleness could not wield in His blessed hands a sceptre of gold or of iron for that there was not found in His soul the pride and hardness of the Kings of this world.

But for this world such royalty would seem only worthy of raillery. The lusty nation which crushed humanity by the weight of arms could not but mock such a King. Far from pitying His weakness the soldiers saw in it only another reason for tyranny. Is it not a law of the strong to outrage the frail and weak?

Those who faint under misfortune are crushed (Ps. lxviii. 27); they who have for them only feelings of justice and excellence, are cruelly scoffed at (Ps. lxviii. 12); they who blush, are surfeited with opprobrium (Ps. lxviii. 8). Therefore the Roman soldiers heaped derision and blows on this Victim who made no complaint. They perpetrated every stupid insult their dull wits could devise. Filing past him they mockingly bent the knee, saying: "Hail, King of the Jews!" (Matt.

xxvii. 29). They struck His cheek, staining their hands with the drops of blood which trickled down from beneath the crown of thorns; these foul wine-bibbers (Ps. lxviii. 13) spat on His sad marred face (Matt. xxviii. 30); they snatched the reed from His patient hands, and struck the thorns which pierced more deeply the sacred head (Mark xv. 19).

Shouts of laughter filled the air (Thren. iii. 14).

Through the mind of the Incarnate Word passed prophecies concerning Himself: "You are not ashamed to oppress "me thus!" (Job xix. 6). "Fools over-"whelm me with their scorn" (Job xix. 18). "All day long my enemies cover "me with shame, and those who were "the first to do homage (to my royalty) "swear against me" (Ps. ci. 9). "There "is none come to my aid" (Is. lxiii. 5). "I have been scourged all the day, and "my punishment began in the early "morning" (Ps. lxxii. 14). "My enemies "have trampled me all the day long, and "their number is terrifying" (Ps. lv. 3). "I have been an object of reproach for

"them, and for fear for my friends" (Ps. xxx. 12). "O God, for having been "zealous for thy house behold the "avalanche of insults of those who "curse me" (Ps. lxviii. 10). "Have "pity, for man tramples me under foot "and persecutes me without an end!" Ps. lv. 2).

At last Pilate arrived. With a swift glance, possibly with some emotion, he took in the piteous condition of the Rabbi, and fancied that He was sufficiently disfigured to excite the compassion of the people. He led Him forward, and presented Him to the ever-growing crowd without, saying: "Behold, I bring "Him forth to you, that you may know "that I have nothing against Him."

And then he added: "Behold the "Man!" (John xix. 4, 5).

Behold the Man!

"Is it a living man," asks Bossuet, "or a "flayed victim?" You have heard the answer, that it is a man. "Behold the "Man!"

It is the man of whom the women of Israel had said: "Blessed is the womb "that bare thee, and the paps that thou "hast sucked" (Luke xi. 27). It is the King around whom yesterday the crowds were shouting; "Hosannah to the Son of "David! Blessed is He that cometh in "the name of the Lord!" (Matt. xxi. 9). It is the Messiah to whom the prophets of Israel had aforetime sung their hymn of love and adoration: "He shall reign, "clothed with beauty (Ps. xcii. 1.), and "with light as a garment (Ps. ciii. 2). "Thou art beautiful above the sons of "men. . . . With thy comeliness and "beauty set out, proceed prosperously, "and reign" (Ps. xliv. 3, 5).

As Pilate pointed to Him, saying: Be-

hold the Man! doubtless the sad thought was in the Saviour's mind: "No, I am "a worm and no man: the reproach of "men, and the outcast of the people" (Ps. xxi. 7).

And those who had known the Son of Mary, the radiant Galilean, in the splendour of His youth and beauty, must have recalled, in their stunned surprise, the utter dismay of the friends of Job of whom it was written: "When they had lifted up "their eyes afar off, they knew him not, "and crying out they wept, and rending "their garments they sprinkled dust "upon their heads towards heaven . . . "and no man spoke to him a word, "for they saw that his grief was very "great" (Job ii. 12, 13).

He was man, but He was also God-Man, and that is why: "His own received Him "not" (John i. 11). This people who were and must have "turned against Him "as a raging lion" (Jer. xii. 8), those Jews whose entrails hell was already burning, felt, on perceiving Him, their fury heighten, their lust for blood become more acute, and cried out in response to Herod: "Crucify "Him! Crucify Him!" (John xix. 6).

Pilate's last resource had failed, and he was in despair. He could not bring himself to stain his hands with the blood of this just man, and sought to shift the responsibility from his shoulders: "Take "Him you," he said, "and crucify Him; "for I find no cause in Him" (John xix. 6).

But the persistent Jews did not intend that Pilate should thus elude their will, and retorted: It is possible that you may have no cause of reproach; "but we have "a law, and according to the law he ought "to die, because he made Himself the Son "of God" (John xix. 7).

The Jews now threw off all disguise. They no longer resorted to the various pretexts that they had formerly employed in order to wring a death-sentence from the unwilling Pilate. They had striven to secure his jurisdiction by accusing Christ of sedition and conspiracy, but he had put aside this capital accusation. So now, cynically and without circumlocution, they openly avowed the real ground of their complaint. Pilate, who felt that the situation was becoming extremely grave, no longer jeered at their Jewish superstitions. In this sudden change of front he read

the implacable, seething fury of the Sanhedrin, a fury becoming more and more disclosed, and increasing with each obstacle. The apprehensions of the courtier were once more aroused : Tiberius reigned.

Pilate was afraid (John xix. 8).

He returned into the Pretorium with Jesus. Hoping that the prisoner would supply him with some answer wherewith to meet this fresh accusation of the Jews he asked Him : " Whence art thou ? " What is thy origin ? "

But Jesus gave him no answer. (John xix. 9).

Jesus answered nothing. From henceforth Pilate took up too cowardly an attitude to be judged capable of confessing before such a crowd the divinity of Christ. To make any reply to him would have been to furnish him with material for one apostacy the more.

Then Pilate, condemning himself, said : " Speakest thou not to me ? Knowest " thou not that I have power to crucify " thee, as I have power to send thee forth " absolved ? "

Jesus responded then : " Thou shouldest " not have any power against me unless it

"were given thee from above. There-
"fore, he that hath delivered me to thee
"hath the greater sin" (John xix. 10, 11).

Strange and striking declaration! It was not Pilate, then—however much that unhappy man might flatter himself on the subject—who was about to condemn Jesus to death. An irresistible fatality—Christians know its name—was alone leading the Master to death. No human being could kill Jesus; the Jewish priests, ardently as they desired His blood, had lost their rights of life and death. Pilate, who had the power to condemn Him, refused to do so, having no complaint against Him. The mysterious, fatal power of sin alone prevailed to work the impossible elements into a possible whole, and bring about the dread event.

The more the governor sought to save Jesus, so much the more the Jews clamoured for His death. Lastly, they returned with yet greater stubbornness to the threatening mention of Tiberius: "If thou sendest forth Jesus absolved, "thou art not Cæsar's friend" (John xix. 12).

Pilate vacillated. The last shreds of his will were fluttering, an easy prey to the breath of the Jewish storm raging around him. He once more called Jesus, and seating himself in the judgment seat, in the place that is called Lithostrotos in Greek, and in Hebrew Gabbatha—that is a pavement—he said to the Jews: "Be- "hold your King!" (John xix. 13, 14). A veritable chorus of yells answered him: "Away with Him, away with Him, crucify "Him!" (John xix. 15). Once more Pilate cast at the Jews as an insult the title he had bestowed on Jesus: "Shall "I crucify your King?" (John xix. 15). And the priests, as though they had taken the governor's irony seriously, replied: "We have no King but Cæsar" (John xix. 15).

Thus, that they might reject Christ, the Jews became apostate. These proud descendants of the Maccabees for hatred of Jesus renounced the autonomy of the chosen people of God, the political liberty of the Jews, which were so deeply rooted in the national heart. Patriotism, national honour, pride of race, the sense of independence, everything capable of instilling

a trace of nobleness into their mean and bitter souls vanished, leaving in their hearts nothing but depths of hatred and infamy.

As to Pilate, if the whole tragic affair were repellant to his better self, it could not have presented a happier aspect to his mean ambition. Had he not, by continued resistance, forced the Jews to declare: "We have no King but Cæsar?"

A courtier of Tiberius could wish nothing more. His vacillation was over. He rewarded the act of Jewish political submission by releasing Barabbas to them, and handing Jesus over to His unhappy doom. The Jews had bowed to Cæsar's sovereignty; that was well worth the crucifixion of a Jew. Only remorse remained with him, and that was but a trifling inconvenience. Calling for water he washed his hands before the people, saying: "I am innocent of the blood of "this just man: look you to it" (Matt. xxvii. 24).

Many were the times that Jesus had declaimed against the detestable formalism of the Jews, who claimed that their conscience was clean because their hands were

washed (Matt. xv. 20). Pilate, who despised the Jews, nevertheless resembled them in their basest traits of character. At the moment when the Jews were embracing Roman government, the Roman governor might well embrace some of the Jewish superstitions in return!

And the people showed themselves generous towards the time-serving governor. They advanced to the rescue of his oversensitive conscience, and relieved it of its last scruples. While Pilate washed his hands, the crowd shouted: "His blood be "upon us and upon our children!" (Matt. xxvii. 25).

History has shown how this cry of the Jews has been realised.

And Pilate delivered Jesus to them to be crucified (Matt. xxvii. 26).

The blood which has fallen upon the heads of the Jews left none the less an ineffaceable stain on the hands of Pilate. To the end of time it will be rehearsed that Jesus "suffered under Pontius Pilate." In the history of human execration the name of Pilate will remain coupled with the hideous name of Judas. In spite of the very real efforts made by the governor

to save the life of Jesus, he must always bear the responsibility of the murder, since, by his own assertion, he alone had the power to prevent it. His vacillation, instead of lessening his crime, serves only to render it indisputable, marking as it does his sense of his responsibility. There is no burden so heavy to bear as the burden of spilt blood. What then must be the weight of the blood of the Man-God?

The Death

"HOWL ye, woe, woe to the day! For "the day is near, yea, a cloudy day" (Ezek. xxx. 2, 3).

"Weep, Jerusalem, as a virgin who "witnesseth the death of her betrothed.

"Ah! ah! ah! what a day! Behold "the day of God, in which the All-Mighty "will lay desolate! (Joel i. 8, 15).

"Call for mourning, ye trumpets of "Zion, howl upon my holy mountain, "that all flesh may be in terror: the "day is come.

"The day of darkness and of black "mist, the day of thick cloud and of "whirlwind.

"The earth shall tremble, the heavens "shall be shaken, the sun and the moon "shall clothe themselves in darkness, and "the stars shall withdraw their light" (Joel ii. 1, 2, 10).

At last the Jews had obtained complete

possession of Jesus (John xix. 16). They had rudely repulsed Him when He had come, a feeble infant, to Bethlehem, dumbly asking to live: but they threw themselves upon Him, as beasts upon their prey, the instant there was any question of killing him. They stripped Him of the purple robe by means of which the Roman soldiers had mocked and insulted them in the person of Jesus their "king," and roughly clothed Him in His seamless tunic and His cloak, feasting their eyes meanwhile on His bleeding wounds. Then, still excited and noisy, seizing a cross that was at hand, probably that prepared for Barabbas, they laid it on His shoulders and drove Him before them into the Way of Sorrows (Mark xv. 20).

Two thousand years before, on that same day and by that same road (St Augustine: Civit. l. 16; c. 32), a father had led forth his son to sacrifice. Isaac, too, had carried the wood for his sacrifice. And the child had said to his father: "My father." And he answered: "What "wilt thou, son?" "Behold," said Isaac, "fire and wood: where is the victim for

"a holocaust?" And Abraham said: "God will provide Himself a victim for "the holocaust, my son" (Gen. xxii. 6-9). This scene was less a type than a direct prophecy. As a fact it had not been ordained that Isaac should be sacrificed. For two thousand years the Jews had handed down the prophecy: "The Lord will provide the victim on "the mountain" (Gen. xxii. 2, 14). Now the day for doing so had dawned, and a new Isaac arose, knowing well that He was the long looked-for Victim.[1]

At the head of the procession walked a soldier, according to Roman custom, blowing on a trumpet to attract a crowd. On either side of Jesus was a condemned thief (Luke xxiii. 32), each bearing a cross; then Pilate's soldiery. Following them came the Jewish mob, speechless with hatred and with joy. Here and there were to be seen sad-faced women, their eyes fixed upon the Saviour, too absorbed

[1] St Augustine says: "The priest Jerome writes that "the Jewish Fathers hold with the utmost conviction "that the place of Isaac's immolation was exactly the "same spot as that on which Christ was crucified." Certain martyrologists, on the other hand, fix for the same date the offering up of Isaac and Good Friday.

in the sight of Him to heed the jostling of the crowd. And conspicuous among the women was one more absorbed, more sad, more beautiful than the rest, one who bore on her face the traces of fifty years of life and of a century of suffering. It was Mary, the Mother of the Victim.

It was now eleven or twelve o'clock.

Jesus had suffered much since the close of the previous day. The overwhelming anguish of Gethsemane, the hurried march which He had been forced to make, goaded on by the hatred and the joy of the Sanhedrites, from the Garden to the house of Caiaphas, from Caiaphas to Pilate, from Pilate to Herod, and back again from Herod to Pilate, the whole terrible night without other nourishment or repose than blows and rapidly succeeding emotions, must have well nigh exhausted His strength. Then had followed the scourging and bleeding wounds, succeeded by the intolerable thirst consequent on such suffering. Although the first stage of the Way of Sorrows led down hill the cross was too heavy a burden for the weakened frame of the condemned Man,

and He staggered at every step. Tradition preserves the record of three falls which were especially painful, and the Psalmist seems to have alluded to the violence which caused them: "I was "pushed and I fell: and God has "raised me up" (Ps. cxvii. 13). None of all who were there held out a helping hand to Him; and if "the Lord "supported Him" that He should not be bruised in His fall (Ps. xxxvi. 24), it was but implacable Justice preserving Him for the atrocities of the crowning act of expiation.

And meekly He went forth, thinking that thus He would open up, through grief and trial, the way of happiness to those who would follow His steps. His present sufferings formed the key to words spoken on a former occasion: "If any man will "come after me, let him deny himself, and "take up his cross and follow me" (Matt. xvi. 25). He saw the vast train of saints who, enamoured of His beauty in sorrow and death, would press along a road marked by the traces of His passion. Martyrs, virgins, penitents, those whom

St Paul would enumerate several years later, who "had trial of mockeries and "stripes, moreover also of bands and "prisons; who were stoned, cut asunder, "tempted, put to death by the sword; "who wandered about in sheepskins and "goatskins, being in want, distressed and "afflicted; of whom the world was not "worthy; who wandered in deserts and "in mountains, and in dens and in caves "of the earth" (Heb. xi. 36-38). Those who make themselves fools before the world for Christ's sake, who accept hunger and thirst, nakedness and buffeting, reviling, persecutions, and blaspheming, and who are willingly made the refuse of the world (1 Cor. x. 13). And lastly, those who, lacking the heroic courage to suffer like their Master, redeem, by their charity, the failure of their power and succour humanity bruised in the persons of the poor and of those who ache with penitence.

It was for the encouragement of these last that Providence shortly ordained to take place, by means of the holy women, one of the most touching of all the

episodes connected with the ascent to Calvary.

But before this incident occurred Jesus, crushed under the burden of the cross, could not rise from the ground. Even before His falls He had scarcely been able to creep along. Now whilst, under the outrages and blows of the escort, He strove to rise and continue His journey, a Cyrenian, coming out of the country (Mark xxi. 21), passed by and probably expressed indignation at the cruelty of the soldiers. Vexed at his interference, they said : Since you are so interested in this criminal, carry His cross for Him ! The Cyrenian tried to excuse himself, but he had not reckoned with Roman caprice. The soldiers seized him and forced him to take up the cross (Mark xix. 21). This passer-by was called Simon. In return for his help he received the gift of sanctity for himself and his two sons, Rufus and Alexander. Later he accompanied on his missions to Spain the great St Paul, whose motto was : "To know nothing save the Cruci-"fied" (1 Cor. ii. 2). The act by which Jesus transferred His cross to Simon was symbolical : a heathen poet has sung of

fleeting generations who, ere they pass away, hand on the torch of life. Since the time of Jesus Christian generations know no more precious heirloom than the Cross.

The Holy Women

THE incident of Simon the Cyrenian had caused a temporary halt in the procession. A woman called Berenice, opposite whose house they paused, profited by the occasion. Opening the door she hurried towards the Master with a clean linen cloth in her hand. For she had noticed upon the face of the condemned Man the clots of blood, the dust and the mud which smirched His countenance and hideously soiled His beard. She laid the cloth upon the august forehead. Jesus wiped His brow. By a miracle of condescension and of goodness, He permitted that His features, outlined by the blood spilt and the stains received, should be imprinted upon the cloth of the kindly and courageous woman. The face of the Master, though half effaced by time, may still be recognised upon it, and the faithful who are admitted to adore it are moved to tears on reflecting that Jesus has left us no other material traces here below

than these traces of insult submitted to for the winning of our love. Berenice was of that society of Gallic women to which Pilate's wife Claudia also belonged. She was born in the region of Bazas, near Bordeaux. By her act of courageous tenderness she also won the esteem of the Crucified for the country which has never failed to produce some of the noblest, bravest women in the world.

The procession once more started on its way. The appearance of Jesus excited pity. The group of women who were following Him had drawn near to Him, and obtained a better view of His pallor, and of the painful weariness betrayed by His heavy, faltering tread. Their hearts bled at the sight. They began to weep, to bewail themselves, to compassionate Him. Hearing their gentle, sympathetic voices, in forcible contrast with the rough tones of the crowd and their ceaseless invectives, He turned to them, saying: "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not "over me, but weep for yourselves and "your children. For behold the days will "come wherein they shall say: Blessed "are the barren, and the wombs that have

"not borne, and the paps that have not "given suck. Then shall they begin to say "to the mountains: Fall upon us; and to "the hills: Cover us. For if in the green "wood they do these things, what shall be "done in the dry?" (Luke xxiii. 28-31).

God, who "seeks out the spilt blood, "must not forget" (Ps. ix. 13) this great crime. He had already "taken away His "spirit" (Ps. ciii. 29), which was the sap of this people, hitherto vigorous and flourishing as "a tree planted near the "running waters" (Ps. i. 3). His anger would shortly consume them "as fire which "burneth wood, and as a flame burning "mountains" (Ps. lxxxii. 15). He would "fill their faces with shame" (Ps. lxxxii. 17), until all the iniquity they had committed should be rendered back (Ps. xciii. 23). And many hundreds of years after the overthrow of Jerusalem by Titus the Jews every Friday could be seen all along the Way of Sorrows lamenting the devastation of their land: "O God, the heathens "are come into thine inheritance, they have "defiled thy holy temple. . . . They have "given the dead bodies of thy servants to "be meat for vultures; and the flesh of

"thy saints to jackals and hyenas. They "have poured out Jewish blood like water "round about Jerusalem. . . . We are "become a reproach to our neighbours; a "scorn and derision to them that are "round about us" (Ps. lxxii. 1-4). ". . . "We eat bread soaked in tears" (Ps. lxxix. 6). "Fire devours our young men "and their betrothed have no thought of "weeping for them. Our priests fall by "the sword, and their widows have no "longer tears in their eyes!" (Is. lxxvii. 63, 64). "Woe to the sinful nation, to "the people crushed beneath the weight of "their iniquity! to the accursed race! to "the worthless sons!" (Is. i. 4).

That all these things might be accomplished the blinded Jews passed out through the Gate of Judgment, leading Jesus out of Jerusalem with them; Jesus, whose prayers and whose blood could alone have averted the wrath of heaven. It was fitting that the redeeming sacrifice should be consummated outside the rebuked city, and that the spot chosen for the rearing of the Cross should indicate plainly that the salvation of the world was not the property of the Temple but was a

free gift to the universe. "Wherefore," says St Paul, "Jesus also, that He might "sanctify the people by His own blood, "suffered without the gate" (Heb. xiii. 12).

On the Cross

AT last the cortège, swelled by an ever-growing crowd, reached the summit of Calvary. With melancholy significance the fainting Saviour might have murmured the words of the Psalmist: "It is here "that I shall find a little rest!" (Ps. cxxxi. 14). The three crosses were thrown on the ground and preparations were begun for the final torture.

It was customary to allow to the condemned a certain quantity of drugged wine to deaden their sufferings. Some of this wine was offered to Jesus, but "when "He had tasted He would not drink" (Matt. xxvii. 34). It was not fitting that the Prince of martyrs should lose one of the pangs which awaited Him. Moreover, the Mosaic law forbade the sacrificing priest to touch any wine (Lev. x. 9); and Christ was "the true priest, entering with "His own blood into the Holies" (Heb. ix. 11, 12). It was fitting that the sacrifice

should be accomplished, even to Jewish eyes, with all the characteristics ordained by law.

Long before the prophet had written : " They pierce my hands and my feet " (Ps. xxi. 17), and the executioners proceeded to fulfil his words. The cross, of Aleppo pine, was lying on the ground ready to receive its unhappy and divine bride. In order to facilitate their movements the Roman soldiers drove the crowd from off the level ground that formed the summit of Calvary : Providence thus allowed the circle of immediate spectators to be more extended, and the holy women to find themselves in the first rank with John. Jesus was thrown upon His cross. The long sharp nails, four-sided and with a round head, lay ready. The hands were the first to be secured. To render the attachment as firm as possible each nail was driven in obliquely from close up to the wrist, at the base of the hand, at the lower extremity of the furrow which is formed when one brings the thumb and little finger together : at the spot which is still the hand, as the prophet would have it, and which is already the arm, as historical

tradition desires it should be. Several blows of the hammer, a jet of blood, and it was done. Tradition says that the holes already pierced in the wood of the cross were separated by a space wider than the span of Christ's arms, and that therefore it was found necessary to strain the second arm into position, dislocating the chest of the Martyr. There seems ground for this legend when one remembers that the cross had very probably been made for Barabbas, a powerful brigand. Agonising pain and laceration of the pectoral muscles were the immediate consequence of this treatment. And for three hours Jesus remained suspended thus, with gaping wounds and chest distended by unspeakable torture.

For the reason already given it was necessary to stretch the legs immoderately. The wounds in the hands were thus made larger by the sharp, jagged edges of the nails. As only the soles of the feet must rest on the cross, it was necessary to force the legs up until the joints of knee and ankle were in a straight rigid line. It is impossible to picture such a position to one's self with-

out a sensation of horror. The nails penetrated between the small delicate bones of the feet, tearing the nerves, bursting the veins. A few more blows of the mallet, and the act of crucifixion was complete.

Jesus had willingly, sweetly, surrendered His Hands and Feet. Was it not the crowning of all the gifts He had bestowed during His life? Was it possible for Him, after all the generous acts of His career, to shrink from giving this supreme proof of His love for us? The soldiers, who had rarely done so hard a day's work, must have been touched by the patient resignation of the condemned man. This Jew was so different from the others, still shouting and excited! His heroism was at the same time so superhuman and yet so calm. And, too, more than once during their grim task they must have encountered an irresistible glance from the pale bleeding face.

The Blessed Mother standing but a few steps away saw all that. In the midst of the terrible tortures inflicted on the Body of her beloved did she discern a feeling of shame which added to His sufferings?

St Bonaventura relates that she loosened her veil and gave it to the soldiers to cover Christ whose cross was about to be raised up before the public gaze (John xii. 23). The soldiers raised no objection to what she asked of them, as the clothes of Jesus fell to them as a right (John xix. 23).

Meantime the earth which germinates was drinking in the intoxicating dew of the Saviour's blood (Ps. lxiv. 10). The cross still lay upon the ground, and the Crucified turned His gaze towards the sky (Ps. xxvi. 8), towards Him who plucks the feet of the innocent out of the snare (Ps. xxvi. 15), who hears the groaning of those in fetters (Ps. ci. 21). The Father had revealed Himself, in the creation, by life; the Son was about to reveal Himself, in the redemption, by death. The moment was at hand when Jesus, "exalted on a "rock" (Ps. lx. 3), would "draw all things "unto Himself" (John xii. 32), and already He had the right to commend the world to the mercifulness of His Father (Ps. xvi. 7).

When at last the cross was reared up on the summit of Calvary a profound tremor must have passed through the

soul of humanity. All Nature rejoices at the rising of the sun. The long looked-for sun of the universe, the Cross, appeared at last, in response to the longing cry of saints and prophets: "Upon the "dark mountains lift ye up a banner, exalt "the voice, lift up the hand" (Isa. xii. 2): the banner around which would rally hearts constrained by love (John xii. 32); the voice that would reach all the scattered sheep of the flock (John x. 3, 16); the hand which opens wide to let all blessing flow forth with His blood (Ps. cxliv. 16).

Doubtless a hoarse shout from the crowd greeted the uprearing of the cross, and as the soldiers let it fall heavily into the hole prepared for it, Jesus, horribly shaken by the sudden shock, prayed for them, saying: "Father, forgive them, for "they know not what they do" (Luke xxiii. 34).

And the Father in heaven gave ear to His prayer. "Whilst rejecting His Son," says Bossuet, "He opened His arms to "us." "God indeed in Christ reconciled "the world to Himself" (1 Cor. v. 19). The Romans knew none of the prophecies familiar to the Jews: they were

simply executing a condemned man, and had never conceived the idea of crucifying a God. St Paul bears witness to this: "If they had known it they would never "have crucified the Lord of glory" (1 Cor. ii. 8). This is why the prayer of Christ has redounded in splendid benediction to the elect nation. The Church of the future which must, to the great shame of the Jews, be called the Roman Church, began in a mysterious manner around Calvary the function which she would be destined to fulfil in the world. The Romans it was who offered up the victim and elevated it in the sight of the multitude. They had already severed themselves from the deicides at the moment when Pilate asked indignantly: "Am I a "Jew?" (John xviii. 35). While the members of the Synagogue, thirsting for blood, pursued the prisoner with insult and blasphemy, they out of pity had constrained the Cyrenian to share the burden of His cross. These future guardians of the unity of the Church would refuse to tear the tunic of Jesus. These depositaries of the faith would be the first to write and to uphold the principal dogma

of the new faith—the royalty of the Nazarene. They would smite their breast at the moment when the sacrifice should be consummated, saying: "Truly that was "the Son of God." Lastly, with the same spear which would open up to the Gospel all the highways of the universe, they would open the sacred heart of the Master, from whence flow streams of benediction and of supernatural life. Since all humanity is guilty of the death of the Redeemer, since all have steeped their hands in His blood, and since therefore the future Church could not be represented but by culprits, does it not seem as though the Romans as early as the time of Calvary were, though unconsciously, inaugurating, substantiating, their immortal destiny?

The cross had been fixed in such a position that the back of Jesus was turned upon Jerusalem, while His face was *to the west*, toward the Eternal City. This detail, so suggestive of the rejection of the Jews, and the calling of the Gentiles, had been foretold: "I will show them "the back and not the face, in the "day of their destruction" (Jer. xviii.

17). "His eyes behold the nations" (Ps. lxv. 7).

By His supplication: "Father, forgive "them, for they know not what it is they "do," Jesus taught once again the great law of mercy tempering justice: from henceforth the responsibility of all actions would have its root in the conscience. The immoral morality of "whited sepul- "chres" would be no longer a religious law, and the severity of the punishment would be determined by the degree of intelligence and knowledge brought to bear by the sinner upon the practice of evil. The cry: "Forgive them, for they "know not what they do," will resound to the judgment hall of God, for it is the cry of Him "whose words shall not pass" (Matt. xxiv. 35), and we cannot doubt that the vast multitude of human souls, sinful but ignorant, will owe their salvation to it.

And, further, it is a splendid and sublime confirmation of that law of forgiveness of injuries which forms one of the most essential elements of the spirit of the gospels.

The Jews themselves even were not

excluded from the effects of this prayer. The conversion of the multitude which followed upon the first sermon of St Peter has been attributed, as indeed all other Jewish conversions, to the sweet petition of Jesus. It has been used by all the martyrs on behalf of their murderers. The first martyr of all, St Stephen, when crushed beneath a shower of Jewish stones, prayed: "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." And with the words scarcely past his lips he breathed out his life with the charity by which it had lived (Acts vii. 59). And since then each time that Christians kneel at the foot of the Cross and repeat the words: "Father, forgive us our "trespasses, as we forgive them that "trespass against us," they know that this honey and this milk of forgiveness dropped from the lips (Cant. iv. 11) of the Master at the very moment when His murderers were steeping Him in unimaginable anguish, and they also are filled with power to forgive.

Pilate had given orders for the accustomed title to be written, indicating the name and crime of the condemned, and fastened to the head of the Cross (John

xix. 19). In these terms, pregnant with contempt and irony for the children of Israel, it was couched: "Jesus of Nazareth, "the King of the Jews." In order that it might be intelligible to the multitudes thronging Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover, they translated it into Hebrew, Greek, and Latin (John xix. 20).

By this act Pilate sought to humiliate the Jews before the whole world, but God (as Bousset says) through it proclaimed the royalty of His Son before the sacerdotal race, which was the race of Israel; before the nation of intelligent and learned people, which was the Greek nation; before a people strong in arms and reigning by authority, which was the Roman people. Thus was accomplished the prophecy: "I "will give thee all the nations for thine "inheritance" (Ps. ii. 8).

The priests saw in the superscription only an insult aimed at their nation, and they protested against it saying: "Write "not, The King of the Jews; but that He "said: I am the King of the Jews." Pilate crushed them with a word: "What "I have written, I have written" (John xix. 21, 22). The inscription was as

unalterable as though God Himself had dictated it.

Had not the new Sovereign whose reign was thus inaugurated said by the mouth of His prophet: "I am appointed king over Sion and over holy mountain, by Him that dwelleth in heaven and derides His enemies" (Ps ii. 6, 4).

The inscription concealed a mystic meaning. The Nazarenes were poor, ignorant, despised, timid. To invest Jesus with royalty in His character of Nazarene, was to recall by one touch the whole system of the kingdom of the gospel as it had been taught by the Crucified.

Around the Cross

THE work of crucifixion finished, the soldiers directed their attention to the dividing of the meagre spoil assigned them by custom. They took the poor mean garments of the condemned man and divided them into four lots (John xix. 23): His cloak and girdle, His turban and shoes. There remained His tunic, woven without a seam. There remained also an unfulfilled prophecy which said: "Upon my "vesture they cast lots" (Ps. xxi. 19). And because of this prophecy the soldiers said among themselves: "Let us not "cut it, but let us cast lots for it whose "it shall be" (John xix. 24).

The poverty of Christ would not have been complete if, though stripped, He had retained possession of the garments lying at the foot of the cross. It is bitter for the dying to see, at the moment of parting from everything, a gleam of cupidity in the eyes which forget to weep,

and which lose sense of the anguish of the departing in the anticipation of rushing upon the spoil. It was not fitting that this sorrow should be spared the King of Sorrows.

The early Christians related that this tunic was woven by the hands of the Virgin Mary herself. Everything belonging to the gentle Virgin, everything which is under her protection, remains intact ; the virtue and strength of those vowed to her worship no less than the garment of flesh which she gave to the Son of God, and of which it was said : " Not a bone of Him shall be broken " ; no less than the linen tunic which was not torn.

Each one having secured his portion, the soldiers, having nothing further to do, sat down at the foot of the cross to protect the condemned Christ against whom the Jewish mob continued to hurl their fury.

And the storm of imprecations and blasphemies, of gibes and insults, raged around the Word whose bleeding flesh hung in grievous plight.

Whilst with eyes dimmed by sorrow

and by blood, with dislocated limbs and open wounds, the Saviour embodied the very spirit of the prophetic words: "O "all ye that pass by the way attend, and "see if there be any sorrow like to my "sorrow: for the Lord hath made a "vintage of me, as He spake, in the "day of His fierce anger" (Lam. i. 12), those who passed and repassed before His cross blasphemed Him, wagging their heads and saying: "Vah! thou "that destroyest the temple of God, and "in three days dost rebuild it, save thy-"self: if thou be the Son of God come "down from the cross!" (Matt. xxvii. 39, 40).

The Wise Man had prohibited "mocking "one who is in bitterness of spirit" (Eccles. vii. 12), but when Jesus was overwhelmed with grief, "all the witnesses of His tor-"ments mocked Him, overwhelming Him "with invective, and wagging their heads" (Ps. xxi. 8). The chief priests, the scribes, and elders, more bitter against Him than were the people, strove to add to the dishonour of His miserable death by recalling the incidents of his life: "He saved others, "Himself he cannot save!" Mockingly

they took up the title inscribed by Pilate: "If He be the King of Israel (Matt. xxvii. "42), the elect of God (Luke xxiii. 35), "let Him come down now from the cross, "that we may see and believe" (Mark xv. 32). They cast in His teeth His declaration of royalty made to Caiaphas, and which had cost Him His life: "He trusted in "God: let Him now deliver Him if He "wants Him; for He said, I am the Son of God" (Matt. xvii. 23). Even the soldiers also mocked Him, coming to Him, and the very soldiers who were refreshing themselves with sour wine, offered it ironically to Him, saying: "King of the Jews, save "Thyself!" (Luke xxiii. 36, 37).

And the scribes, knowing the Scriptures, did not see the amazing miracle which was being wrought before their very eyes, brought about, though all unconsciously, by themselves. The most explicit prophecies were being fulfilled by them in an astonishing manner: "Let us oppress the "poor just man . . . let us lie in wait for "Him. . . . He calleth Himself the Son "of God . . . let us then see if His words "be true. . . . If He be the true Son of "God, He will defend Him, and will de-

" liver Him from the hands of His enemies. " . . . These things they thought, and were " deceived : for their own malice blinded " them (Wisdom ii. 10-21). All they that " saw me laughed me to scorn : they have " spoken with the lips : He hoped in the " Lord, let Him deliver Him, let Him save " Him (Ps. xxi. 8, 9). All that pass by " the way have robbed Him ; those who " came near him were ashamed of Him " (Ps. lxxxviii. 42). What are these " wounds in the midst of Thy hands? " These are the wounds wherewith I was " wounded in the house of my friends " (Zach. xiii. 6).

It was not for the first time that the scribes and priests demanded a miracle of the Messiah, but they had already received their answer from Jesus : " An evil and " adulterous generation seeketh a sign : " and a sign shall not be given it but " the sign of the prophet Jonas. For as " Jonas was in the whale's belly three days " and three nights, so shall the Son of Man " be in the heart of the earth three days " and three nights. And the men of " Ninive who repented at the preaching " of Jonas, shall rise in judgment with

" this race, and shall condemn it ! " (Matt. xxii. 40, 41).

Hanging on the cross, Jesus must have recalled the prophecies written concerning Himself : " My inheritance is become to " me as a lion in the wood : it hath cried " out against me (Jer. xii. 8). . . . Many " say to my soul : There is no salvation " for Him in His God (Ps. iii. 3). . . . I " am become a reproach to them : they " saw me and shaked their heads (Ps. " cviii. 23). . . . My tears have been my " meat day and night whilst it is said to " me daily, Where is thy God ? (Ps. xli. " 4). . . . Lord, when wilt thou look upon " me ? rescue thou my soul from their " malice (Ps. xxxiv. 17). . . . They have " opened their mouths against me, as a " lion ravening and roaring (Ps. xxi. 14). " . . . They scoffed at me with scorn, they " gnashed upon me with their teeth (Ps. " xxxiv. 16) : the troubles of my heart " are multiplied (Ps. xxiv. 17). . . . All " nations compass me about (Ps. cxvii. 10). " . . . Why, O Lord, are they multiplied " that afflict me ? many are they who rise " up against me (Ps. iii. 1). . . . They " surround me like bees, they envelop me

" like flames which crackle among thorns " (Ps. cxvii. 12). . . . Deliver me: for " thou art He that hast drawn me out of " the womb: my hope from the breasts of " my mother. Thou art my God, depart " not from me " (Ps. xxi. 10, 11).

The Thieves

AS foretold by Isaiah (Is. liii. 12), the Cross of Jesus had been reared up in company with two others on which criminals were nailed. They, having been spared the scourging and fatigues which had fallen to the lot of the Saviour, employed their remaining strength in adding insults to those already heaped upon Him (Matt. xxvii. 44); sometimes bitterly reproaching Him for the promises He had made to the common people, and to which His ignominious death seemed to give the lie: "Hopest thou then in "the Lord, that a great multitude still "asketh: What is this One who will "show us the benefits we have waited "for?" (Ps. iv. 6); sometimes mingling their curses with the tumult arising from the crowd. The whole of suffering humanity which curses God instead of uniting itself with Him through the sufferings of the God-Man, was represented

by these two thieves, hideous to look upon, bleeding, mouthing blasphemy, inaccessible even to the irresistible brotherhood which springs from a common misfortune, a common death.

But it was fitting that the saving grace of redemption should not tarry, and that the power of the redeeming blood should be manifested on the very day on which it began to flow. Therefore Jesus, whose head drooped upon His shoulder, let a glance full of mercy fall on one of the wretched malefactors: and a sudden rush of pity, repentance, and grace filled the heart of the thief, and silenced his curses. But the other continued to blaspheme and to repeat the mockery of the multitudes: "If thou be the Christ, save thyself and "us!" (Luke xxiii. 39).

The repentant thief indignantly replied: "Dost not even thou fear God, since thou "endurest the same torture as His Son?" Thus the repentant thief made an act of faith: he believed. He had not experienced the convincing power of the miracles, and would not witness the stupendous prodigy of the Resurrection: the divine beauty of the Master under suffering was sufficient

to excite his adoration of that which thousands more favoured than he would continue to deny and blaspheme. Well might the Master have repeated His famous saying: "I have not found so great faith in Israel" (Matt. viii. 10); and the spectacle thus presented to the "gainsaying" people (Romans x. 21) was an awful confirmation of His words spoken on a former occasion: "Woe to thee, Corazain! woe "to thee, Bethsaida! for if in Tyre and "Sidon had been wrought the miracles "that have been wrought in you, they "would long ago have done penance in "sackcloth and ashes" (Matt. xi. 21).

Truly, the good thief did penance; he confessed his sins while charitably exhorting his comrade to examine himself: "We "are condemned justly, for we receive the "due reward of our deeds: but this man "hath done no evil" (Luke xxiii. 41). All the fragrance and strength of contrition are contained in these few words; the humiliating avowal, the resignation which accepts punishment without murmuring, above all, the upward gaze at "This man who hath done no evil," but who has willed to suffer more than

all sinners that all sinners may be saved.

"Which man is he who loveth most?" the Saviour had one day asked a Pharisee, who had replied: "He to whom most is "forgiven." And Jesus, returning this admirable speech, had added while indicating the Magdalen: "Many sins are "forgiven her, because she loved much" (Luke vii. 42, 47). And the Redeemer, while dying, emphasised once more the sublime law of mercy.

The believing thief, in full assurance of faith, and despite his humiliating condition as a guilty man (Ps. cxv. 10), had dared to speak: "Lord, remember me when "thou shalt come into thy kingdom." And Jesus, the butt of so much brutality and outrage, Whom no one had sought to defend, of Whom no one had asked anything, gave to the miserable wretch, transformed by faith and penitence, all that He had to give, all that which He would give to no other. "Verily, I say unto thee," He replied, "this day shalt thou be with "me in Paradise!" (Luke xxiii. 43).

"This robber stole Paradise!" cries St Chrysostom in an access of holy jealousy.

. . . "No one before him ever received "such a promise; not Abraham, or Isaac, "or Jacob, or Moses, or the prophets, or "apostles; the thief pressed in before all "these! But his faith also surpassed "theirs! He saw Jesus tormented, and "adored Him as if He were in glory. "He saw Him nailed to a cross, and "petitioned Him as if He were en- "throned. He saw Him condemned, "and asked a favour of Him as of a "king. . . . O admirable thief! thou "sawest a crucified man and thou pro- "claimedst a God!"

True it is that the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and that one can take possession, as by force, of eternal happiness (Matt. xi. 12).

True it is also that we should not trust to our last hour for our conversion, since of these two thieves one died unsaved though he had Christ Himself before his eyes.

The Mother of Sorrows

It must have been at the moment of granting to the penitent thief the unspeakable privilege of entering with him into Paradise that the gaze of Jesus rested on his Mother. The Blessed Virgin had no need to feel envious of the thief, for Paradise had been hers since the Annunciation. Nevertheless she would have many years still to wait before rejoining her child in glory: therefore Jesus cast on her a look of filial tenderness to assure her that she filled always the first place in His heart.

With wet passionate eyes she stood watching panting on the cross the Son of her womb. Near her stood her sister, Mary Cleophas, the Magdalen, and the beloved disciple. She did not speak: supreme grief, like supeme joy, is silent. We need no Evangelist to tell us that there, no less than at Bethlehem, she "pondered in her heart" (Luke ii. 19)

every act, every word, connected with the terrible event.

As she watched Him the mournful words of the prophet floated through her mind: "Before His days be full He shall "perish: and His Hands shall wither "away. He shall be blasted as a vine "when its grapes are in the first flower, "and as an olive tree that casteth its "flower" (Job xv. 32, 33). "Liars rise "up before His face, fury has assembled "against Him and menaced Him; they "have ground their teeth against Him; "His enemies have beheld Him with "terrible eyes: they have opened their "jaws against Him, they have outraged "Him and struck Him in the face; they "have glutted themselves with His anguish, "God has given them over to the un-"godly" (Job xvi. 9-12). "Thirst burns "Him, His strength faints from hunger, "famine invades His ribs, premature decay "devours the beauty of His skin and con-"sumes His arms" (Job xviii. 9-13). . . . "Here, His flesh being consumed, His "bones cleave to His skin, His lips and "His cheeks are glued to His teeth" (Job xviii. 20); "His flesh falls away in shreds,

"and His bones are laid bare" (Job xxxiii. 21). "Ah, why do you glut yourselves "thus with the poor flesh (Is. xl. 6) which "He assumed but for love of you?"

The poor Mother recalled the happy careless days at Bethlehem; the delicate, tender infancy, the first cries, the childish lispings, which have given place to blood-shed and wounds and the death-rattle. In thought she hears again the angel recounting the prophecies of Isaiah concerning the Emmanuel. Alas! the same prophet who had compared the frail new-born babe to a flower of the field (Is. xl. 6) had also said: "From the sole of the feet "unto the top of the head there is no place "that has been spared from blows: all is "bruises and pallor, all is swollen beneath "the blows, there are no swathing bands "(as at Bethlehem) to envelop Him, no "liniments and no oil to mollify His "wounds" (Is. i. 6). And the grief-wrung heart of the Virgin, deep and bitter as the ocean, slowly retraced in the bleeding wounds of the Crucified the picture drawn by the prophet: "Who could have be-"believed my reports?" In her *Magnificat* she had sung: "He hath showed might in

"His arm!" (Luke i. 51). Isaiah replies to her: "To whom is the arm of the Lord "revealed?" (Is. liii. 1). Who could divine the work which He was about to accomplish in His Son, Who "would spring "up as shrub whose root is in dry ground; "He has no sightliness or beauty; we "have seen Him: His appearance is in- "tolerable, and we have wept for His "being alive.

"The scorn, the most abject of men, the "man of sorrows, and acquainted with fail- "ings; His face was hid under a veil of "dust and blood; He was despised and "we esteemed Him no more highly.

"Surely He hath Himself borne our "wearinesses, and carried our sorrows, and "we have esteemed Him as it were a leper, "stricken of God and humiliated.

"But if He was wounded, it was because "of our iniquities; crushed, it was because "of our crimes; the price of our pardon "was upon Him, and by His livid hue we "have been healed.

"All we have wandered like lost sheep, "each one has gone his own way: and "God hath laid on Him the iniquities of "us all.

" He will be offered because it was His " own will, and He will not open His " mouth ; He will be led as a sheep to the " slaughter ; as a lamb in the hands of the " shearer, He will be silent and will not " open His mouth.

" He will disappear in the anguish of a " lawsuit. Who will recount the crime of " His race? for He has been violently cut " off from the land of the living. I have " struck because of the wickedness of my " people.

" . . . There will be the ungodly even " to His sepulchre, and a rich man for His " death (Joseph of Arimathea).

" . . . It pleased the Lord that He " should be crushed in His weakness.

" He has been numbered with the " scoundrels, He has borne the sins of " many, and He has prayed for his perse- " cutors " (Is. liii. 12).

The Virgin wept, and tears streamed from her eyes . . . and she stretched forth her hands trembling with grief, and none was able to comfort her (Thren. ii. 16, 17) . . . Her mother-heart cried out : " Behold, " O God, how I am broken ; my bowels " which have given thee this Son are torn,

"my heart is overthrown within me, I am "full of bitterness. While abroad the "sword destroyeth my Son, at home in "my heart death is not less grievous" (Thren. ii. 20). . . . From out the past the voice of the prophet, himself in tears at a like spectacle, speaks to her: "To "whom shall I compare thee, to whom "liken thee, O daughter of Jerusalem; to "whom shall I compare thee, and how "console thee, O daughter of Zion? For "great as the sea is thy sadness; who "can staunch the wounds of thy heart?" (Thren. ii. 13).

To "soothe" the heart of the Mother one must be found who could heal the wounds of the Son, all of whose bones she could number (Ps. xxi. 18). The sword which, passing through the heart of Mary struck her Son, must be wrenched from the hands of Justice; and against Justice God Himself was powerless.

Slowly Mary tasted the full bitterness of grief. Her deathless love—sacred ocean—rose and fell with the tide of her sorrow. Pious hearts love to dwell on the revelations which she is believed to have made afterwards to one of her chosen friends:

"I have seen His dying, tear-drowned "eyes, His cheeks pale with the hue of "death, his piteous face, with half-open "mouth and parched tongue . . . His "sunken cheeks clave to His teeth, and "His pinched nostrils added to the "sharpened aspect of His face . . . His "body was wan and bloodless. His "limbs, incredibly thin, seemed part of "the wood of the Cross. His hair and "beard were matted with blood. In all "this rending and pallor of my Son "His heart alone resisted, because it was "of perfect construction and very strong" (Revelations of St Bridget, i. 10; iv. 70).

And Jesus, who had just spoken to the penitent thief the most merciful of all His utterances, let His gaze fall on her whom He loved more than all the world beside, and who was experiencing almost infinite anguish in exchange for her incomparable innocence. He recalled the smiles and caresses of Bethlehem, the terrors of the flight into Egypt, the toils of Nazareth, the anxieties, the fatigues, the loneliness she had undergone during the last three years; He thought of her present grief, the future

days of mourning and solitude during twenty more long years, and in the midst of His own torments He yearned to comfort the Mother to whom splendid promises had been made and who up to now had received nothing but indescribable sufferings. "O Virgin, whom I have "brought into my house, I wish to make "thee a joyful mother of children" (Ps. cxii. 9). "Thou art about to lose the "only Son of thy virginity and of thy "spotless love; I will give thee in ex- "change the beautiful and glorious "generation of the chaste (Wisdom iv. "1), of whom thou shalt be the mother." ". . . All virtue, all moral beauty, all "honour, will seek thy shade and flourish "under thy care . . . thou shalt be the "Mother of divine grace, of purity, the "Mother beloved of all, admired of all ". . . and if thou wouldest at this 'moment foresee how pure, loving, free "from all corruption, will be those who "from henceforth will call themselves thy "children, look on him who stands by "thy side, the eldest of that family; the "leader of that phalanx; look on him "whom I have loved" (John xx. 2) . . .

"Woman, behold thy son!" (John xix. 26).

And when He had uttered these words: "Woman, behold thy son!" Jesus meditated on the heart-breaking solitude in which His mother would be left. He knew her heart; knew all that she had suffered during the three years of His public life when she never saw Him but from a distance, and was forced to efface herself silently in the crowds that separated her from Him. He thought of the twenty years she would still live, with heroic soul, but with vacant eyes, weaned of the vision of the Child to whom she had given birth.

Musing on all this He turned towards John. His look seemed to say: "O "thou who hast heard the beating of my "heart (John xxi. 20), and who knowest "the secrets of my soul: thou whose "hands are pure and whose gaze pro- "found; I choose thee, and confide to thy "charge this treasure, this pearl of great "price, this holy soul. Thou wilt soothe "her grief, conjure up memories of a "sweet past, shield her old age. Thou "wilt fill my place when the end of her

"exile is come. Thou wilt close the "dear eyes which have shed so many "tears over me, thou wilt render up to the "angels whom I will send her virgin flesh, "the holy tabernacle of her body, from "which I issued forth a pure and bleed-"ing host." And while the eyes of the dying Man were saying this, His lips were murmuring: "Son, behold thy mother!" (Joan. xix. 26).

There is no Christian who has not heard these words. And since that moment in which the friend of Jesus became, in the name of friendship, the adoptive son of the Mother of God; since that moment in which the Son, unable to forget His mother, begged His friend to love her and surround her with devotion and honour; there is no friend of Jesus who is not drawn by a like friendship to make himself the child and the servant of Mary.

The Last Agony

HAVING thus parted with the last treasure remaining to Him, Jesus remained in very truth the orphan who could say to God, the Father of all the forsaken: "Thou seest, for thou considerest labour "and sorrow, how that I am stripped "bare (Ps. x. 14). O thou refuge of the "poor (Ps. ix. 10), who healest the broken "of heart, and bindest up their miseries "(Ps. cxlvi. 3); thou hast said to me: "Thou art my son, I have begotten thee "(Ps. ii. 7); thou hast been my strength "from my Mother's womb. Thou art my "protector and my glory (Ps. iii. 4). Look "upon me, and have mercy on me, and "save the son of thine hand-maid" (Ps. lxxxvi. 16).

Alas! the Saviour, abandoned by His disciples, bereft of His Mother, lifted His failing eyes in vain to heaven (Is. xxxviii. 14; Ps. lxviii. 4). It was written that the great high priest, the high priest for ever

after the order of Melchisedech (Heb. vi. 20) should offer His sacrifice " without " father, without mother, without gene- " alogy " (Heb. vii. 3); and as the hour of oblation approached He found Himself derelict, alone, forsaken by heaven and earth.

Whilst the darkness deepened on Calvary, and filled the whole earth (Matt. xxvii. 45), a mysterious, horrible night wrapped the soul of the Redeemer in icy folds. As the gathering clouds veiled the light of the sun, so the cloud spoken of by the prophet (Lam. iii. 44) hid from the straining eyes of the Victim the Face of God.

That loved and gentle Face, the contemplation of which had strengthened and comforted the God-Man in the midst of all the trials and all the struggles of His life, was shrouded in a mystery, the secret of which theology has never yet been able to unravel. In vain the Saviour called: " O Lord, hear my voice. Have pity! " Hear me! My heart saith to thee: I " seek thee, I seek thy face, O Lord; turn " it not thus away from thy servant (Ps. " xxvi. 7-9). Reject me not, neither cast

" me away from thy face (Ps. l. 13). Thou " seest my humiliation, my confusion, and " my shame (Ps. lxviii. 20). Must I say in " the excess of my soul: He hath cast me " far away from His sight? (Ps. xxx. 23). " Look again on my soul, deliver it (Ps. " lxviii. 10), turn not away thy head from " thy child, for I am in misery (Ps. lxviii. " 18). Have pity on me, O Lord, have pity " on me; my soul trusteth only in thee; under " the shadow of thy wings will I wait until " all this iniquity be passed!" (Ps. lvi. 2).

Although the hypostatic union was not severed in Jesus—any more than the presence of God essential to the preservation of life is withdrawn from the damned — the Victim was nevertheless at this time passing through a state similar to that unspeakable pain of loss which constitutes their most painful expiation.

" It was essential," says Bossuet, " that " everything should be divine in this " sacrifice: a satisfaction worthy of God " was demanded, and a God to offer it; a " vengeance worthy of God, and wrought " by a God. To be nailed to a shameful " Cross; to have the Hands and Feet " pierced, and to hang supported only by

" these Wounds ; to have all the limbs
" bruised and broken by a violent shock ;
" to feel both Heart and Tongue dried
" up through loss of blood and incon-
" ceivable anguish of mind and body, and
" to receive no refreshment save a draught
" of gall and vinegar; to see amid these
" unspeakable sufferings unnumbered mul-
" titudes mocking Him, nodding their
" heads, and ridiculing His pitiable con-
" dition ; to have a thief crucified on either
" side, one of whom, desperate and furious
" to the last, died uttering a thousand
" blasphemies, is about the most terrible
" aspect of the crucifixion of Jesus that
" our feeble imagination can devise. Truly
" it is an awful picture, and may well fill
" us with horror ; but the cruelty of this
" torture, and all those other torments
" which we have considered in detail, are
" but as a dream compared with the
" anguish, and oppression, and agony
" which rent the soul of Jesus under the
" chastising hand of God.

" Press it well home to your souls,
" Christians, that all the bodily sufferings
" were but preparatory to the consummat-
" ing of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ ; and

"this final stroke must be struck at Him "on the Cross, and by a higher than "human power" (1st Sermon on the Passion).

It was while thus "bruised in infirmity" (Is. liii. 10) that Jesus began to repeat the Psalm, so bitter and yet so resigned, of which the phrases are full of tears and the fragments seem to bleed: "Eli, Eli, why "hast thou forsaken me?" (Ps. xxi.).

Voices which the dying Man no longer heard sneered at Him from the foot of the Cross: "This man calleth Elias!" It was necessary that insult should pursue the unhappy sufferer even into the pangs of death (Matt. xxvii. 47).

Then, that the Scriptures might be fulfilled and that His resignation and obedience might be manifested to the end, He added: "I thirst" (John xix. 38). Despite the mocking chorus which arose: "Let be, let us see whether Elias will "come to deliver Him," one of the soldiers ran and took a sponge and filled it with water, mixed with vinegar, with which the executioners quenched their own thirst, and fastened it to the end of a reed and held it to the mouth of the dying man.

Jesus pressed the sponge to His parched and dying lips.

Then He said : " It is finished ! " (John xix. 30).

" The dust is finished, the wretch is " consumed ! " had been written by the prophet (Is. xvi. 4), and " justice is satis- " fied by expiation."

But suddenly life seemed to revive, and with a loud voice Jesus cried : " Father, " to thy hands I return my spirit ! " (Luke xxiii. 46 ; Ps. xxx. 6).

Then His grief-stricken and bleeding Head drooped forwards.

He signalled to Death, and gave him permission to take possession of Him.

And He expired ! (Luke xxxiii. 46).

The Converts

THEN the veil of the Temple was rent in two from the top to the bottom (Mark xv. 38). "The earth quaked, and the rocks "were rent; and the graves were opened, "and many bodies of the saints that had "slept arose" (Matt. xxvii. 51, 52). It was the realisation of the miracles foretold by the prophet (Ps. xvii. 47).

The centurion who, standing before the Cross, had watched the Saviour die, struck by the cry He had uttered before rendering up His soul (Mark xv. 39), glorified God (Luke xxiii. 4), saying: "Truly "this man was the Son of God" (Mark xv. 39).

And the soldiers "that were with him "watching Jesus, having seen the earth-"quake and the things that were done, "were sore afraid, saying: 'Indeed, this "was the Son of God'" (Matt. xxvii. 54).

"The soldiers of the Roman army who

" thus became the first converts belonged " to nation of Gauls " (*v.* Les Gauloises et les Gauls).

" And all the multitude of them that " were come together to that sight, and " saw the things that were done, re- " turned striking their breasts " (Luke xxiii. 48).

As the morrow was the Sabbath in order that the bodies might not remain upon the Cross on so solemn a day the Jews besought Pilate to have the legs of the victims broken, and to take down the bodies. The soldiers therefore came ; and they broke the legs of those who had been crucified with Jesus.

They must have been glad to ascertain that Jesus was already dead, so that they need not do the same for Him (Ps. xxxiii. 12). One of them, however, moved by an irresistible force, with his spear pierced the side of the sacred corpse (Ps. civ. 18). Immediately there flowed thence blood and water. All that was accomplished that the prophecies might be fulfilled. One gave orders " not to break His " bones " (Ex. xii. 46 ; Num. ix. 12), the other announced : " They shall look on

"Him whom they have pierced" (Zach. xii. 10). These last details have been preserved for us by St John, who was an eye-witness (John xxi. 24; 1 John i. 1).

Conclusion

DURING the nineteen hundred years that have elapsed since the Crucifixion many sorrows have fallen upon the human race and upon the Church. What ruin and carnage, what wholesale destruction of towns, what cutting off of generations and blotting out of peoples, and as a consequence what tears and mourning! Nevertheless, there remains not one of these sorrows from which time has not robbed the sting.

One wound alone always bleeds. One only sorrow survives and never will be soothed; the sorrow caused by the murder of the Only Son of the human race, the First-Born of Christians, the one innocent being in this world, our brother Jesus Christ. Over this sorrow one will always weep. Grief will lift trusting eyes to Him to learn resignation. Virtue will seek to learn from Him the secret of His strength. Love will draw near and sound the

Wounds in His Hands and Feet and Heart to discover the hidden source of unbounded generosity and divine enthusiasm. The sin-stricken conscience will seek in His dying gaze the beam of mercy which convicts, converts, and absolves. But from all these eyes turned towards "Him whom they have pierced" gush out, to all eternity, unquenchable streams of tears; for this Cross of Jesus bears the double imprint of a sorrow and a crime for which faith, repentance, and love will not be comforted.

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